



Inge Morath Iran



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# Inge Morath Iran

Texts by Monika Faber and Azar Nafisi

Edited and with a preface  
by John P. Jacob



Steidl

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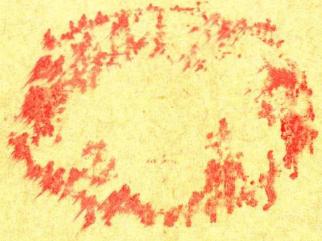
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## PREFACE

*The place I longed to know had no political name.<sup>1</sup>* Inge Morath, 1990

Inge Morath came to Paris in 1948, to join Magnum Photos as a researcher and editor. She relocated to London in 1951, and was there apprenticed to Simon Guttman, founder of the legendary Dephot Agency in Berlin, where Robert Capa began his career as a photographer. After a few years selling her pictures under the pseudonym Egny Tharom – her own name spelled backward – Morath returned to Paris, and in 1952 she presented her photographs to Capa. He invited her to join Magnum as an associate member. She worked as an assistant to Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1953 -'54, and in '55, the year that she became a full member of Magnum Photos, traveled extensively in Europe. Being a greenhorn, as Morath later noted, most of her early assignments were jobs that did not interest Magnum's "big boys."<sup>2</sup>

In 1956, Morath made two trips to the Middle East for *Holiday Magazine*, one of Magnum's most important clients. The assignment was a notable professional achievement for Morath, as it was among the earliest to take her outside Europe (she had traveled to South Africa in 1955, and would also go to the US and Mexico in '56). During March and April of that year she traveled to Iran, the partial fulfillment of her long-held dream to travel the Silk Road from Europe, through Persia, to China. After a brief return to Paris, she traveled on to Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Israel. The article that her photographs would accompany, with a text by foreign correspondent Alan Moorehead, was published in the December issue of *Holiday*.<sup>3</sup> For Morath, she later wrote, it was the beginning of "the time of big stories and far-flung trips."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to her work for *Holiday*, Morath also had assignments to photograph for the Pepsi-Cola Corporation in Tehran and for Standard Oil in Abadan, and she documented the Shah's celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, at the Golestan Palace for a Magnum distribution.<sup>5</sup> In total, she exposed more than one hundred rolls of black and white and approximately forty rolls of color film during her visit to Iran.<sup>6</sup> A self-proclaimed frugal photographer who rarely devoted more than a few frames to a single subject, the range of Morath's imagery, across more than 5,000 exposures, is extensive.

In contrast to her many later journeys, Morath did not keep a personal journal in Iran, and the letters that survive, all to her family, provide few details about the places she visited and people she met along the way. Her traveling companion was Robert Delpire, who would publish Morath's second monograph, *De la Perse à l'Iran*, in 1958. Recalling their journey after more than fifty years, Delpire described Morath working in Iran "without a precise idea of what we could do with the photos."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the shooting script supplied to Morath by *Holiday* listed only two subjects that were required for its coverage of Iran: carpets and the mosques of Isfahan. Morath's notes and letters indicate that after a long week in Tehran spent waiting for their travel documents to arrive she and Delpire drove south to Shiraz, and from there flew to Abadan. Delpire departed there, returning to Paris with the film that Morath had exposed until that point. Morath then returned to Tehran, taking an alternate route. She spent altogether five weeks in Iran.

Morath was not the first Magnum photographer to work in Iran, and as a former researcher and editor for the agency she would certainly have been familiar with the earlier reportage of Cartier-Bresson, from 1950, and fellow Austrian Erich Lessing, from 1952. But Morath's approach to Iran was different from that of her colleagues. In contrast with Cartier-Bresson, who photographed in Iran as part of his extended work in Asia, and with Lessing, who worked there on a specific story (the 1952 locust plague), Morath was the first to focus broadly on the country itself. Seeking to report on the larger culture through encounters with its various constituencies, Morath's photographs verge on the anthropological in their attention to common aspects of life – family, work, religious and creative expression, clothing, architecture, etc. – in each of the communities that she visited.

The recurrence of these themes in Morath's photographs would appear to contradict Delpire's description of her unpremeditated working in Iran, and yet the seeming absence of an editorial agenda is one of the work's notable characteristics. In fact, Morath's attention to what Azar Nafisi has referred to as "the undercurrents of modernity and tradition" that run side by side in Iran served to underwrite the impression that she wished to convey of the richly layered history – sometimes conflicting and sometimes harmonious – of an ancient culture in transition. To achieve this, a precise idea about her subjects was not required so much as consistency in the way that she approached them.

As a photographer, Morath's approach to Iran was curiously at odds with the texts that her pictures accompanied. Although many of her photographs of Iran were reproduced by *Holiday*, Moorehead's text mentions the country only in relation to the nations it borders, such as Iraq. Personally, Moorehead was repulsed by the modernity of oil rich countries such as Iran, preferring the more exotic "whiff of the lazy Arabian East."<sup>8</sup> Edouard Sablier, the French journalist whose text introduces *De la Perse à l'Iran*, expressed a similar disillusionment. "The traveler leaves for Persia, only to reach Iran," Sablier noted in his opening paragraph. "He looks forward to nightingales and roses, to a glimpse of dark eyes beneath a deftly fastened veil, and finds for the most part very ordinary people, rather glum and shabbily dressed, in very ordinary streets."<sup>9</sup>

In Morath's photographs, the seeming absence of any indicators of modernity serves a different motivation than orientalist nostalgia. Morath sought evidence of the endurance of tradition within new contexts, revealing both the past as a place of ongoing resistance to the present, and the present as unknowable except as it is revealed by the past.<sup>10</sup> Only in the images produced for her assigned work for *Holiday*, Pepsi, and Standard Oil, is modernity unavoidably at hand. In these photographs Morath has, in each case, produced a counter-narrative to what was required by her clients. While photographing carpets for *Holiday*, she documented child labor; while photographing the oil refineries in Abadan, she documented the imbalances between native and foreign labor forces; and while photographing the new Pepsi bottling facility in Tehran, she documented the incursion of foreign goods and influence into the domestic economy.

Thus, although the encroachment of the West was not her primary subject in Iran, neither was it one that she shied away from. In these images, Morath typifies the optimistic yet unswervingly critical style that would come to be known as "concerned photography."<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, as a reader of history Morath would have recognized these as contemporary political conflicts. Aware that a culture as ancient as Iran's is densely layered, Morath was far more interested in documenting the persistence of Iran's traditions than she was in their clash with Western values. For her, the continuity between past and present is expressed through the coming together, within a single photographic frame, of Zoroastrian, Islamic, and contemporary Iranian life; in the ancient architecture of the bazaar, for example, where boots and umbrellas dangle from the ceiling and shoppers wear chadors. Such images offer a reconfiguration of the traditional understanding of "decisive moment" as a coming together of distinct historical, rather than optical, elements. In fact, Iranian modernity is not absent from Morath's photographs, but conventional symbols of Western modernity are. A passionate interest in history, and an awareness of the difficulty in representing its complexity without falling back on convention, would remain central to Morath's work, particularly in her later photographs of China and Russia.

One of the most vexing questions about Morath's photographs of Iran, given both the scope of the work and its great personal and professional importance, is why so few images were seen during her lifetime.<sup>12</sup> While this question may never be answered definitively, the most likely reason, discovered during the making of this book, is that a light leak in her camera caused significant damage to many of her black and white negatives. Without access to a lab during her journey, Morath would not have known about the problem until after she had returned to Paris and examined her film. Prints made from the damaged negatives would either have to be cropped or in some way doctored to remove the black streak created by the light leak; in either case an undesirable flaw. For the young photographer, the damage to her film must have been an extraordinary disappointment.

It may also explain why Morath's photographs published in *De la Perse à l'Iran* were predominantly color, in contrast to her earlier, largely black and white monograph with Delpire.<sup>13</sup> Like many of her colleagues, Morath, at that time in her career, preferred black and white, producing color photographs primarily for her clients.<sup>14</sup> In Iran she worked with two cameras, one holding black and white film and the other holding color. Her second camera functioned flawlessly, and her color film came out fine.<sup>15</sup>

*Inge Morath: Iran* is a reinvestigation of the black and white work from this important early assignment, something that would have been nearly impossible during Morath's lifetime. Images were selected for inclusion by studying the markings and notations on Morath's contact sheets for indications of personal preference. Her negatives were then scanned and digitally retouched to remove the light stain caused by her damaged camera. Finally, the photographs were sequenced in a roughly chronological order, in part for accuracy, and in part to preserve the way that Morath worked by creating a unique portrait of each community that she visited.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to representing an important body of her photographs, *Inge Morath: Iran* also offers an opportunity for reassessment of the photographer herself. Morath's visit to Iran provided her with the freedom to explore and develop her own vision as a photographer. Her distinct interest in the continuity between past and present in Iran, and the techniques that she deployed in order to illustrate that concept with her camera, provide key insights into Morath's later work. Of particular note, in this respect, is Morath's framing technique in Iran. A portraitist throughout her lifetime, Morath tended to place her subjects at or near the center of her pictures. Here, the edges of her photographs are of equal importance, as Morath frequently sought to bring multiple subjects together within a single frame. She would return to

this technique again in her later photographs of the US and China; places where, as in Iran, Morath's personal knowledge of her subject was overwhelmed by the power and the drama of direct experience. Other techniques deployed in Iran, such as the aforementioned use of thematic groups, the use of serial imagery, and the attempt to represent different layers of time within a single frame, are explored in depth by Azar Nafisi and Monika Faber in their essays for this book.

Although photography was the primary means through which Morath found expression, her camera was but one of many tools in a kit to which she continued to add throughout her lifetime. In addition to the many languages in which she was fluent, Morath was also a prolific diary and letter-writer, a dual gift for words and pictures that was unusual among her colleagues. Morath was also atypical in her working practices, rejecting many of the precepts common to photojournalism of the period. Chris Boot, a former director of Magnum Photos, has written of Morath that:

*She did not pursue events [...] and so her work lacks the drama of some of her colleagues. Nor was she given to moral rhetoric. Rather, she unsentimentally made pictures that were guided by her relationship to a place. These relationships were invariably intimate and long lasting... Similarly, her photographs of people are born of intimacy without sentimentality. It is as if the presentation of relationships takes the place of story structure, and her work is best understood as an ongoing series of observations of the life she made for herself.<sup>17</sup>*

Morath's photographs comprise a highly personal view of Iran; less a body of objective knowledge than a catalog of personal encounters. Not surprisingly for such a young artist, her images reach across photographic history, ranging from picturesque conventionality, in her photographs of the village of Vanack, to pointed commentary, in Abadan. But in her subjective and unsentimental approach, and in her free-ranging narrative structure, Morath's work points forward to the future of photography. In this respect, as Monika Faber notes, Morath's work in Iran is perhaps more closely allied to the contemporaneous work of Robert Frank – whose book *Les Américains* was published by Delpire almost simultaneously with *De la Perse à l'Iran* – than to the Magnum colleagues with whom she is more frequently compared.<sup>18</sup>

Above all, Morath's work is distinguished by the fact that she approached her subjects through the same prism of intellectual history to which she also sought to contribute. She prepared for assignments by immersing herself in the history and literature of the places she intended to visit, rather than relying on visual tropes and social stereotypes. More importantly, she rejected the notion of photographic objectivity; the authoritative position of standing outside the picture looking in. "Inge Morath," as former Magnum director John Morris has noted, "was a part of history more than she was a witness to it."<sup>19</sup> She recognized herself – as a photographer, but also as a human subject – as a participant in the larger historical document comprised by her photography. Uniquely among her Magnum colleagues, Morath was a diarist who wrote with images. The thread that connects her work is time; the convergence of intellectual history and social memory within the photographic moment.

John P. Jacob  
Inge Morath Foundation

- 1 Morath, Inge, in "Preface," *Russian Journal*. (New York: Aperture Foundation, 1991), p. 7.
- 2 Morath, Inge, in *Magnum Stories*. Chris Boot, ed. (New York: Pahidon, 2004), p. 339.
- 3 Alan McCrae Moorehead (22 July 1910 - 29 September 1983) had won an international reputation for his coverage of the Middle East during the Second World War.
- 4 Morath, Inge, in "Berlin Lecture." Undated manuscript, Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York, p. 26.
- 5 A story created for widespread media distribution rather than for a single publication.
- 6 Morath's letters suggest that one reason for her return to Paris after five weeks in Iran, rather than traveling directly on to the other countries she had been assigned to cover, was that she had used up all her film there.
- 7 Interview with the author, Paris, March 5, 2008.
- 8 Moorehead, Alan, "The Middle East," *Holiday Magazine* vol. 20, no. 6 (1956), p. 59.
- 9 Morath, Inge. *De la Perse à l'Iran*. (English edition, New York: Viking, 1960), unpaginated introduction.
- 10 "What interests me," she wrote, "is the continuity - or lack of it - between past and present. This is what [...] is expressed in the title of my [book] *From Persia to Iran*." Quoted in Carlisle, Olga, manuscript for *Grosse Photographen unserer Zeit: Inge Morath*. (Luzern: Verlag C.J. Bucher, 1975); Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York, p. 6.
- 11 The phrase was coined in the 1960s by Cornell Capa, Morath's colleague at Magnum Photos, to describe photojournalists whose work demonstrated a humanitarian impulse to educate and change the world, not just record it.
- 12 After the publication of *De la Perse à l'Iran* in 1958, small selections of Morath's photographs of the Middle East were presented in two retrospective exhibitions and their accompanying catalogs, *Inge Morath: Fotografien 1952 - 1992* (exhibition: Salzburger Landssammlung Rupertinum; catalog: Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1992), and *Inge Morath: Das Leben als Photographin* (exhibition: Kunsthalle Wien; catalog: Munich: Gina Kehayoff Verlag, 1999). In both of these, Morath presented only her black and white photographs of Iran.
- 13 Morath, Inge. *Guerre à la Tristesse*. Robert Delpire, ed. (Paris: Robert Delpire, 1955).
- 14 Morath later worked extensively with color photography, and for some projects, particularly after the 1980s, used it exclusively.
- 15 Morath also carried a Polaroid camera in Iran. According to Robert Delpire, she used it primarily to make portraits of nomads which were, in most cases, their first encounters with a photographic image. The making and giving of a Polaroid served as a kind of introduction, which enabled Morath to then photograph freely within the encampments she visited (interview with the author, Paris, May 17, 2007). This is the only known professional usage of Polaroid materials by Morath. As no Polaroid prints remain in her archive, it is presumed that she gave them all away in Iran.
- 16 The photographs are grouped geographically, then roughly chronologically, following Morath's notes. Morath devoted the first leg of her journey, from Tehran to Abadan, to work for Magnum and for her book with Delpire, and the shorter, second leg largely to complete her assignments for Standard Oil and Pepsi-Cola.
- 17 *Magnum Stories*, op. cit., p. 338.
- 18 Morath would certainly have been familiar with Frank's photographs through Delpire, who had published Frank's work alongside photographs by Magnum colleagues Cartier-Bresson, in the revue NEUF, in 1952, and Werner Bischof, in the book *Indiens pas Morts*, in 1956. The title of Morath's *De la Perse à l'Iran* is a parallel to that of the English language edition of *Indiens pas Morts, Incas to Indios*. Moreover, Morath's working "without a precise idea," that Delpire encouraged of her in Iran, is similar to the style of Frank's photography in Peru, which he described as "[...] very free with the camera. I didn't think of what would be the correct thing to do; I did what I felt good doing," quoted in *The Pictures Are a Necessity: Robert Frank in Rochester, NY November 1988*, William S. Johnson, ed. (Rochester: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1989), p. 30.



1956-9

PERSIA

900 to 902 (LIBAN)

915 - photo Riva

Photog. INGE MORATH

Subject : PERSE (Téhéran)

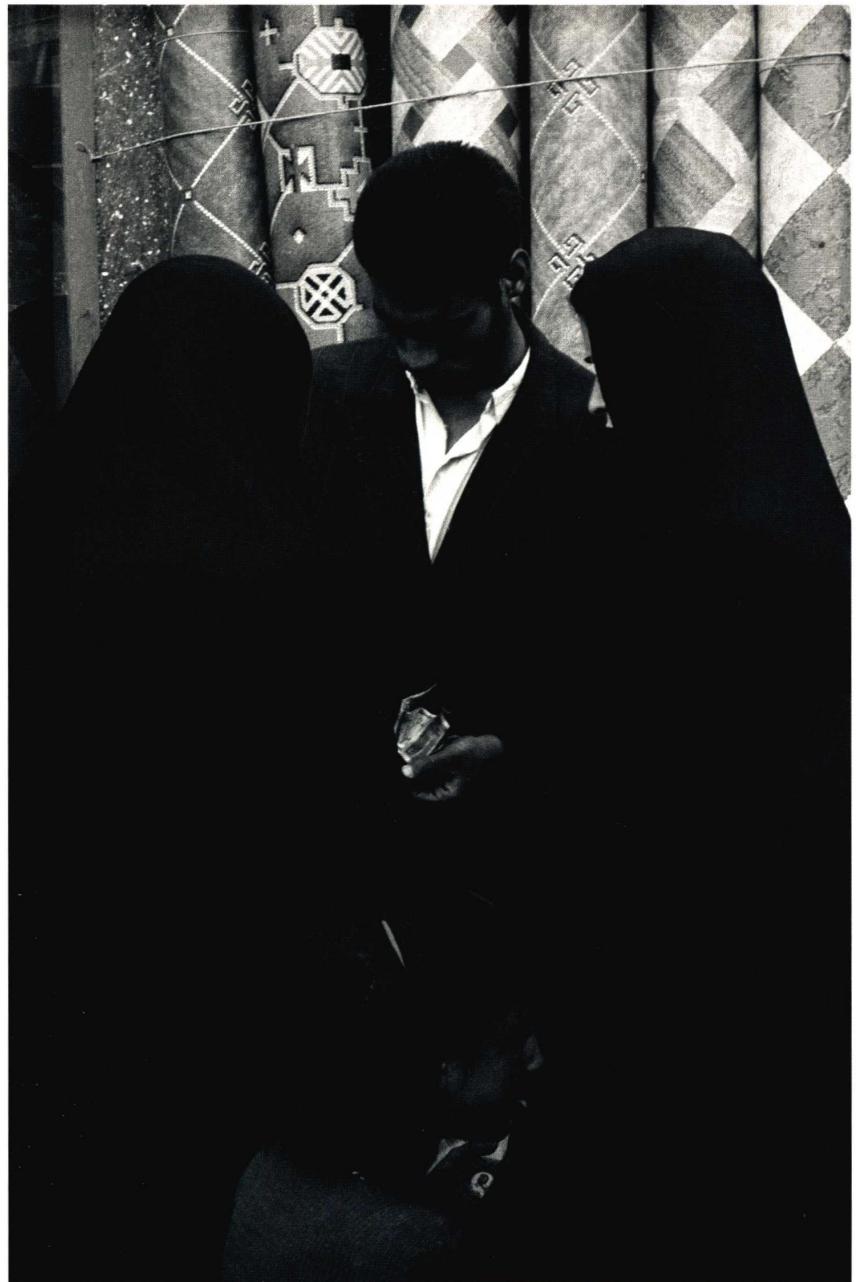
34 Contacts : 56 9 808 to 828

56 9	84I	Frame I-44-45	negs à Pepsi Cola
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56 9

Tehran





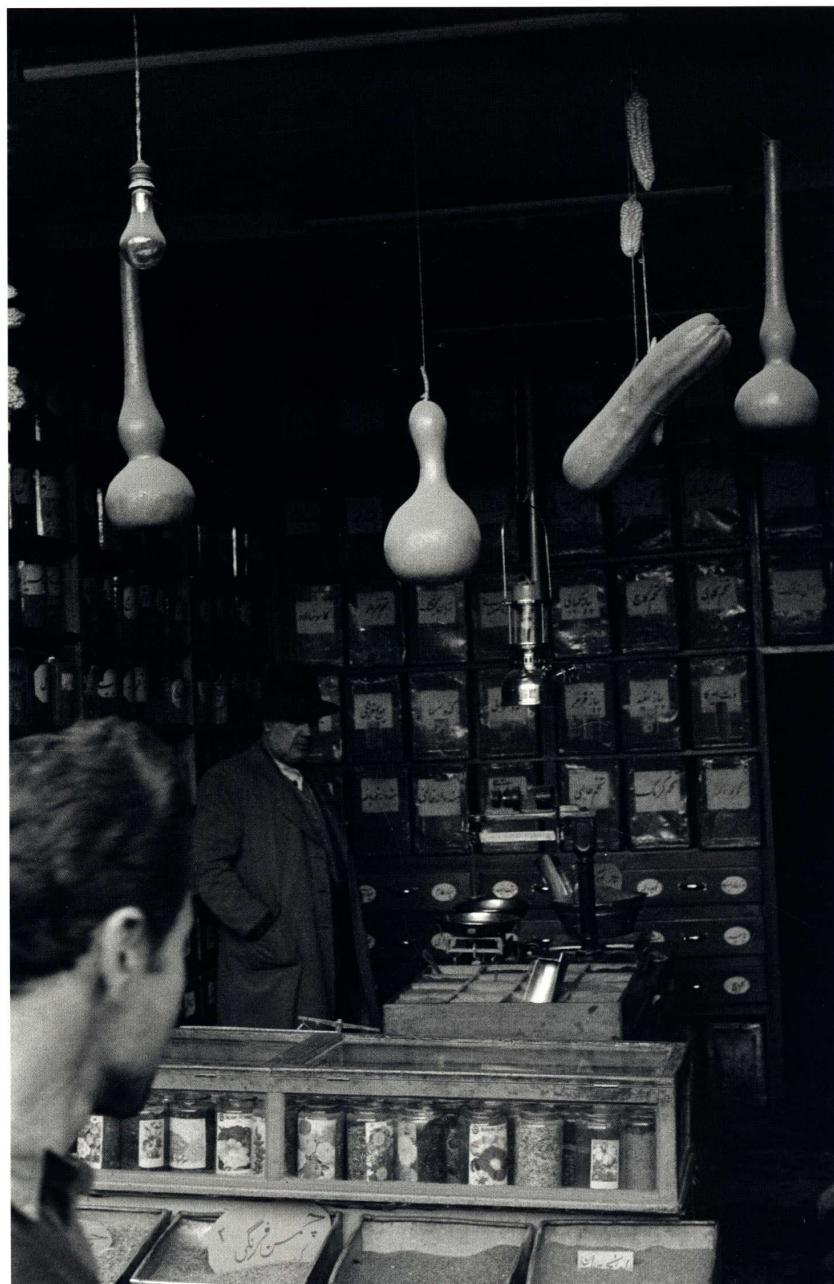
Tehran market.



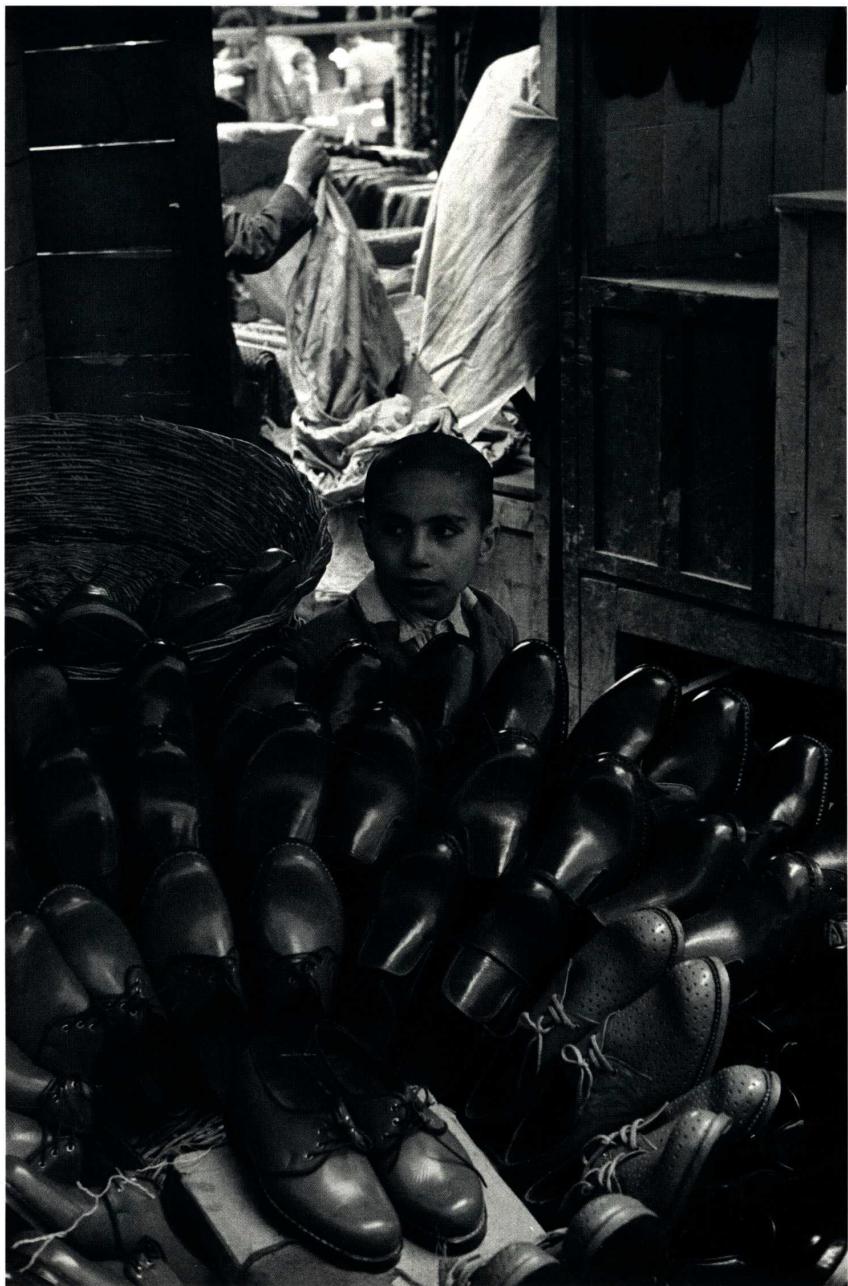


Stalls with old books, gold teeth, samovars, and water pipes.

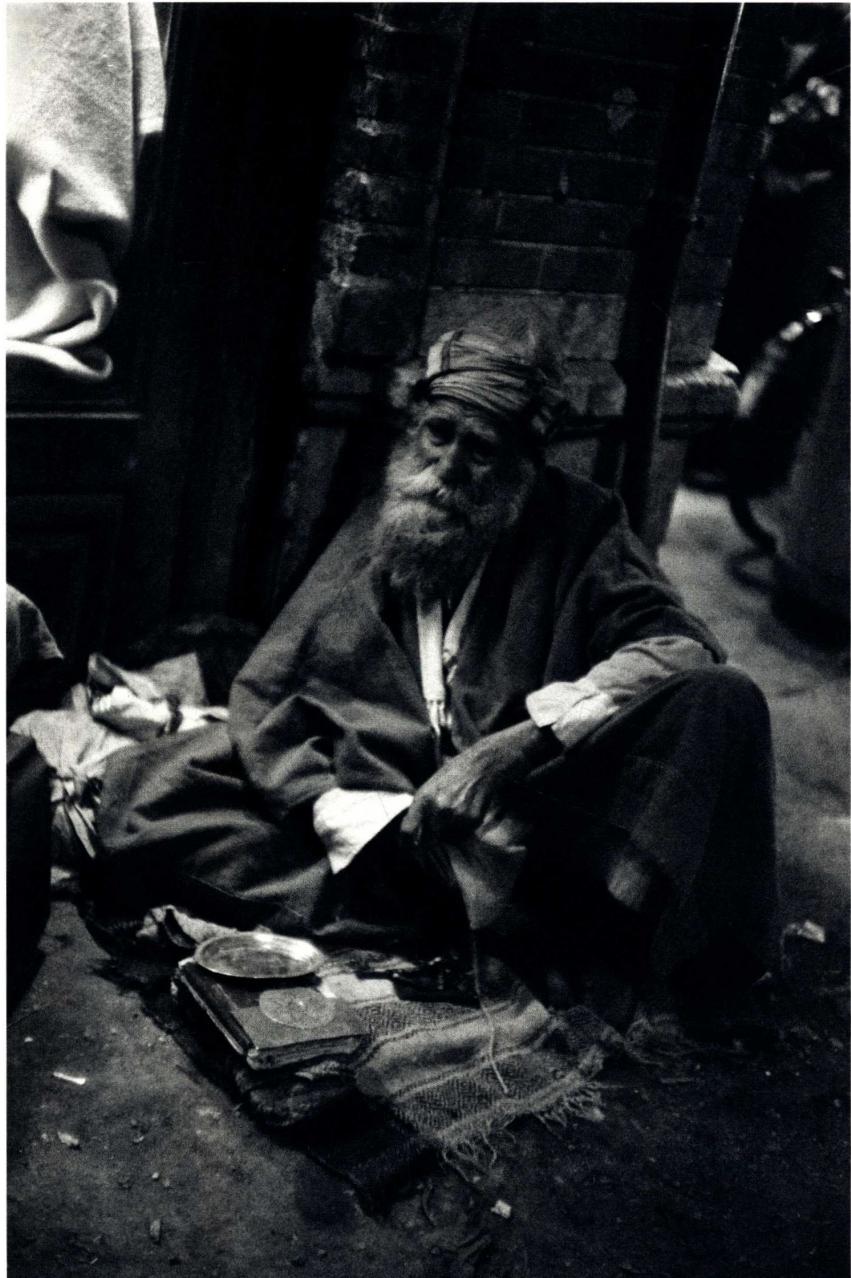




Shop interior.



Shoe Shop.



Poor dervish beggar.





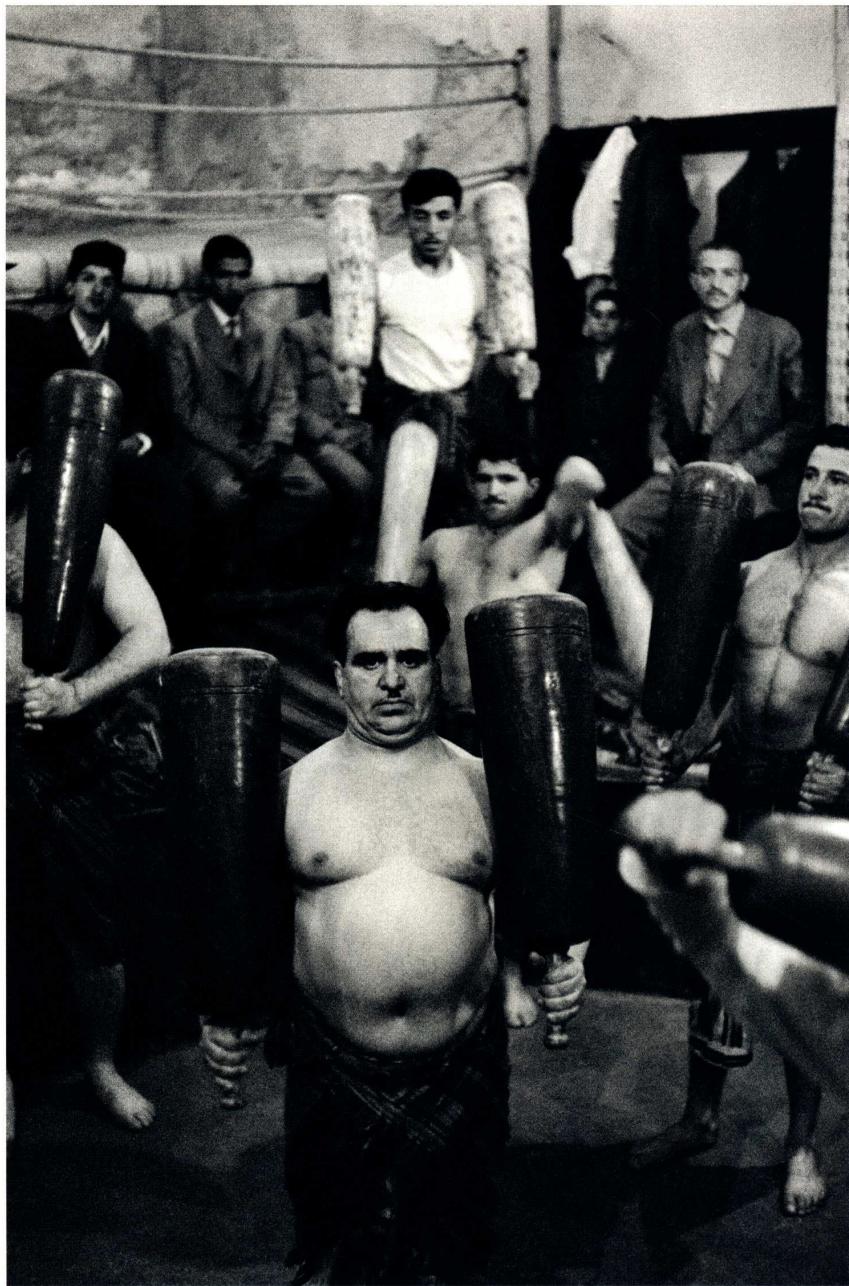
Strong men performing.



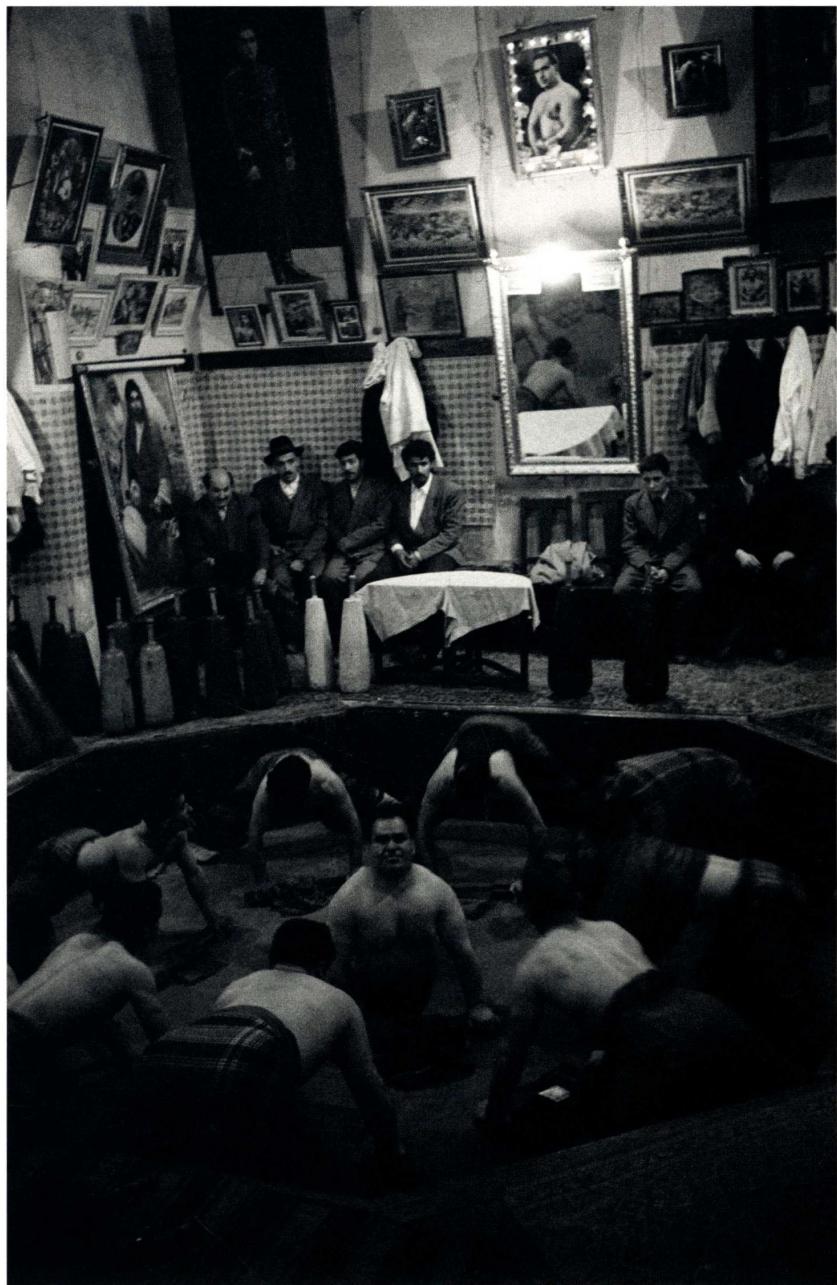


Street musician.





In a Zurkhana. The exercises are carried out to the rhythm beaten on a drum or sung by a member of the group. Verses of the Koran or from the old Persian poets are chanted.



In a Zurkhana.



Street scene.

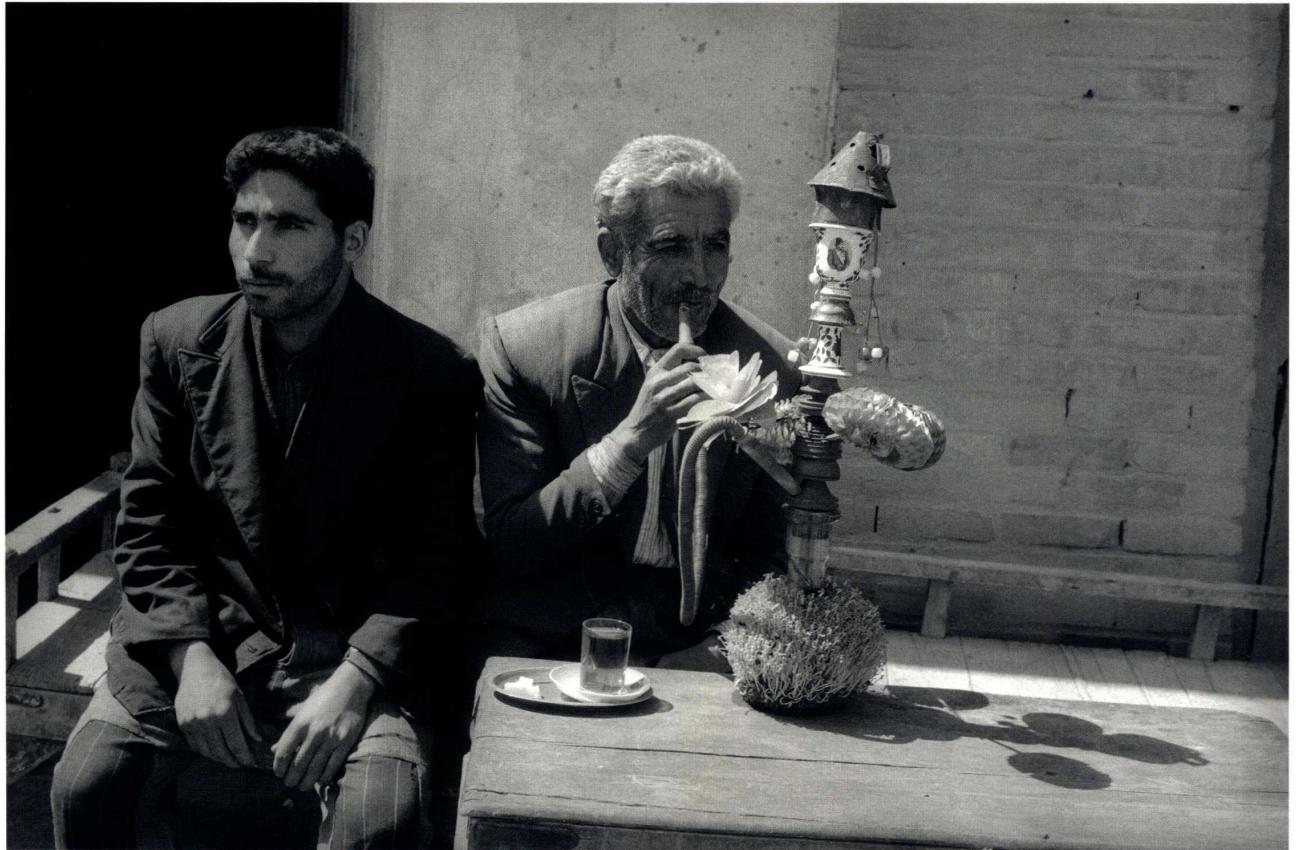


Street scene.



Street scene.

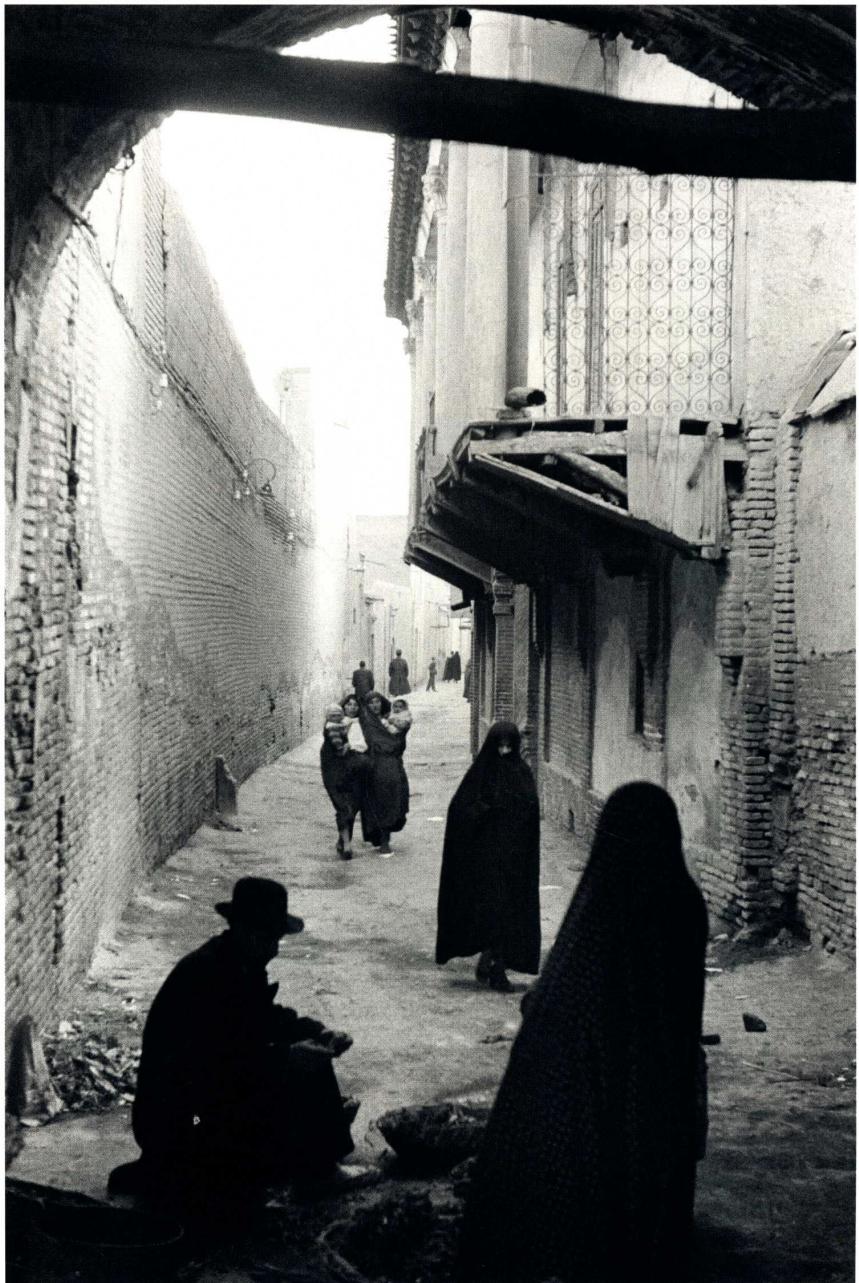




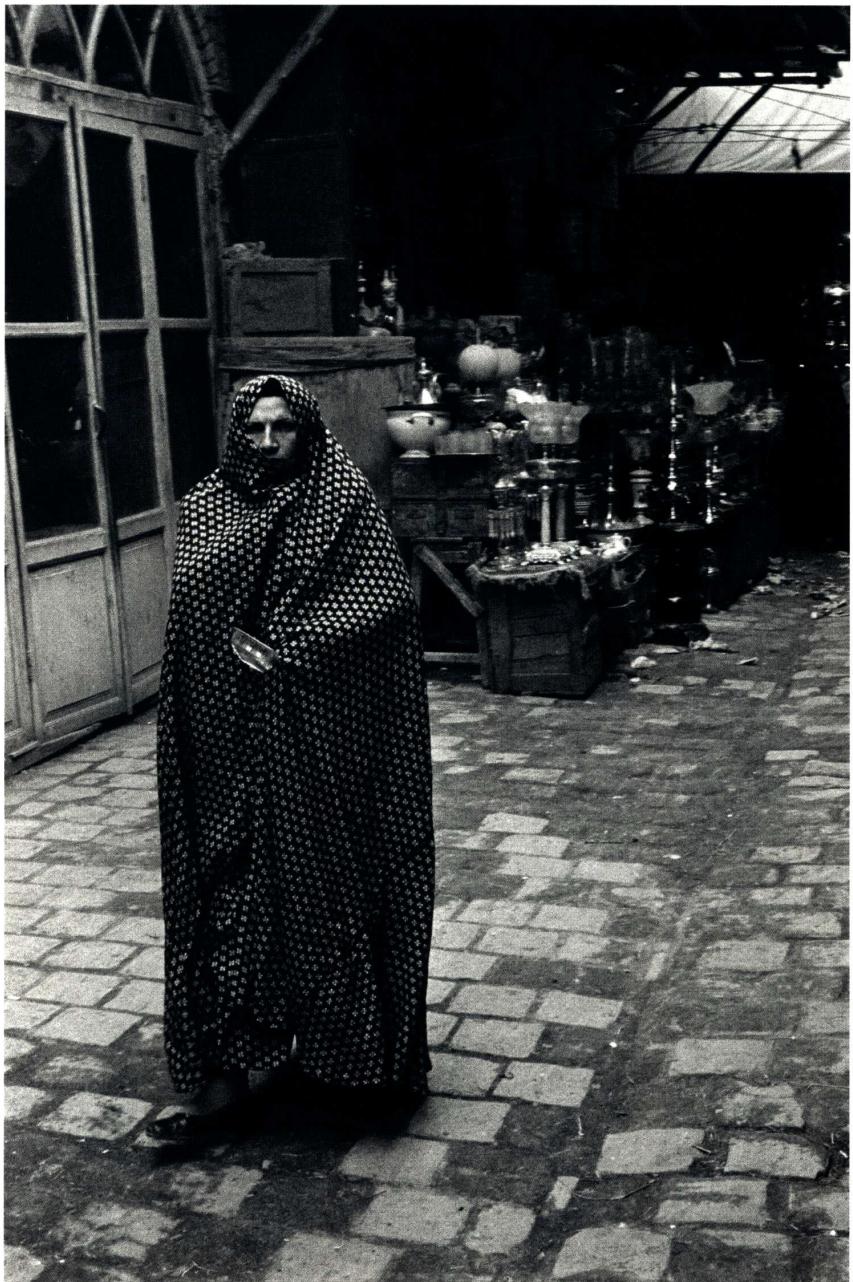
Chibouk smoker.

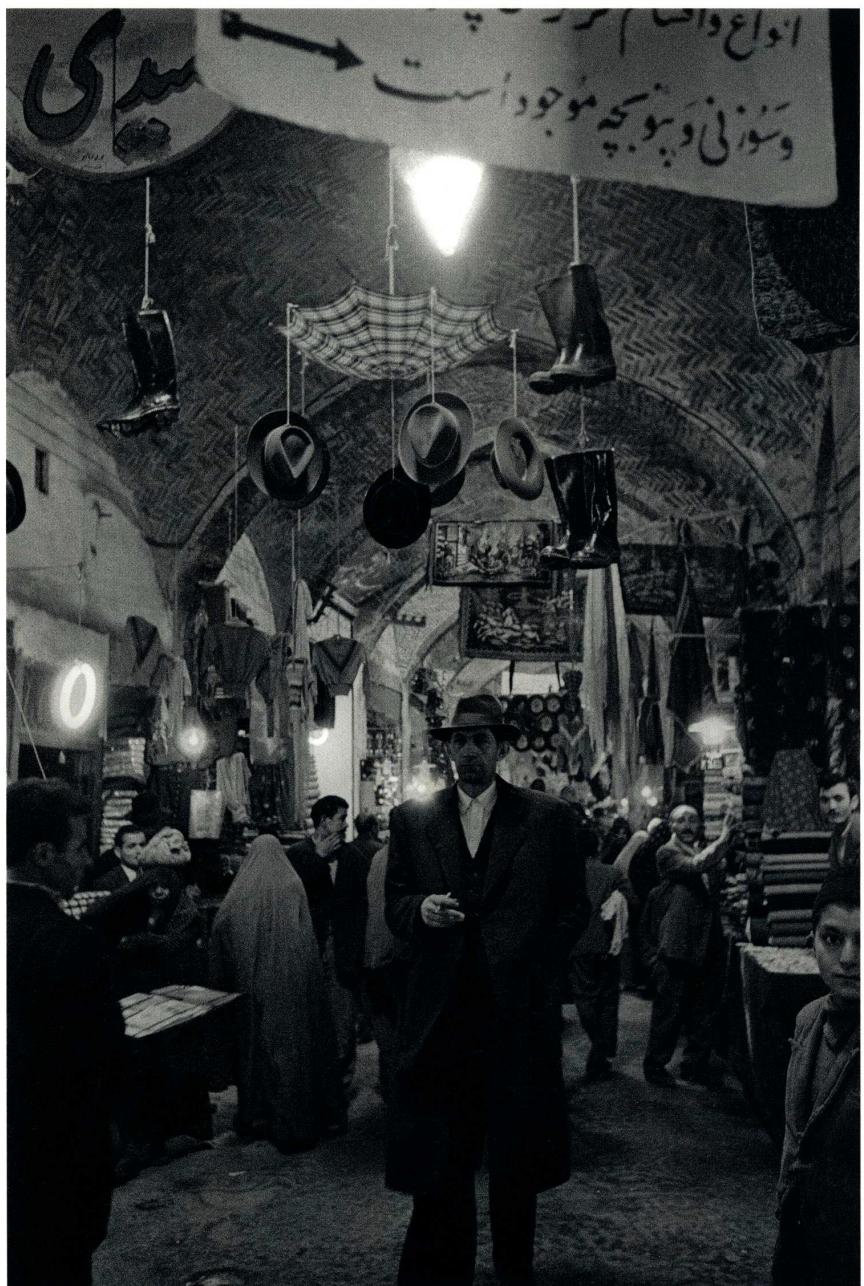


Street scene.



Street scene near the bazaar.





Inside the bazaar.





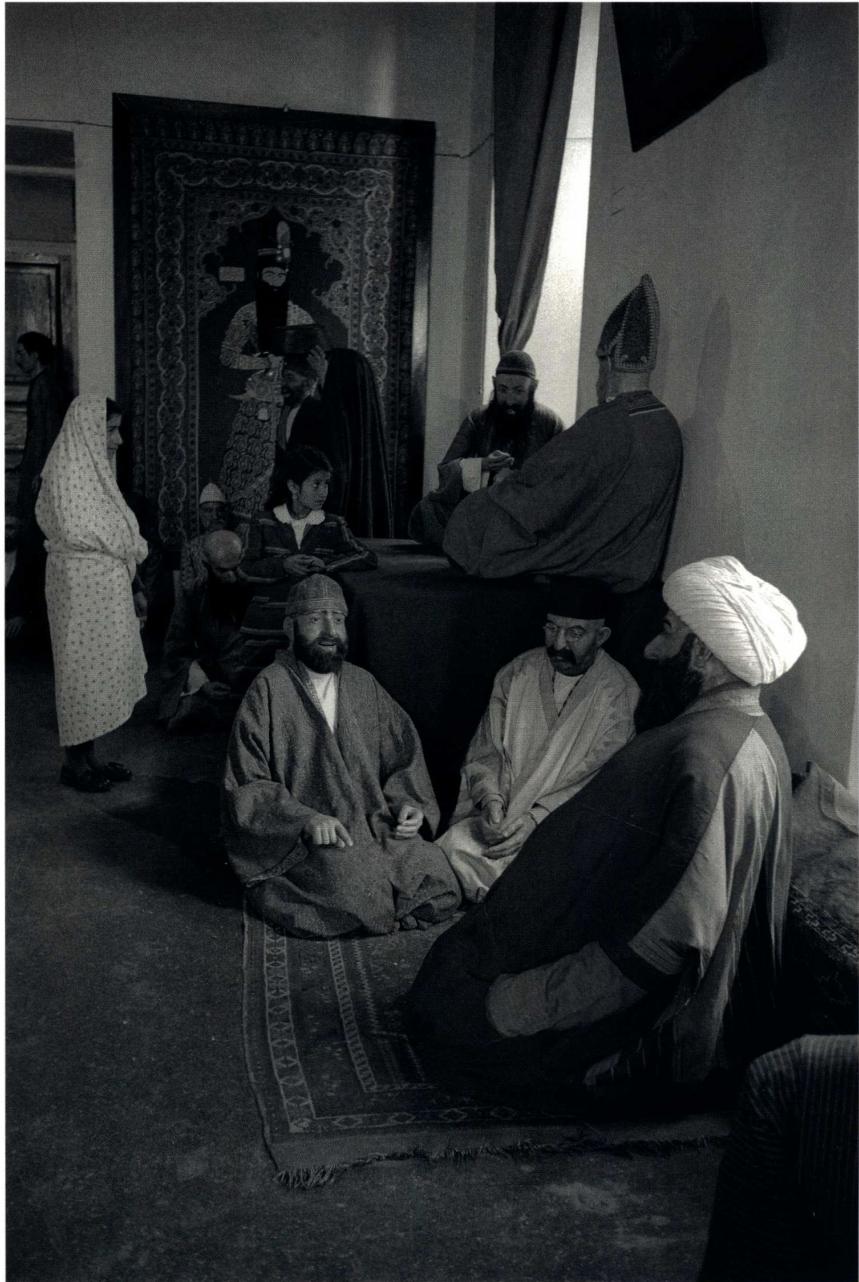
Inside the bazaar.





Inside the bazaar.





Inside the Ethnological Museum.





Room being readied for the Nowruz reception, Golestan Palace. According to tradition, a table is laid with bowls containing seven kinds of fruits and spices, all of whose names start with the letter "s."



Reception room and entrance hall, Golestan Palace.



Nowruz reception, Golestan Palace. Generals resting before their formal reception by the Shah.





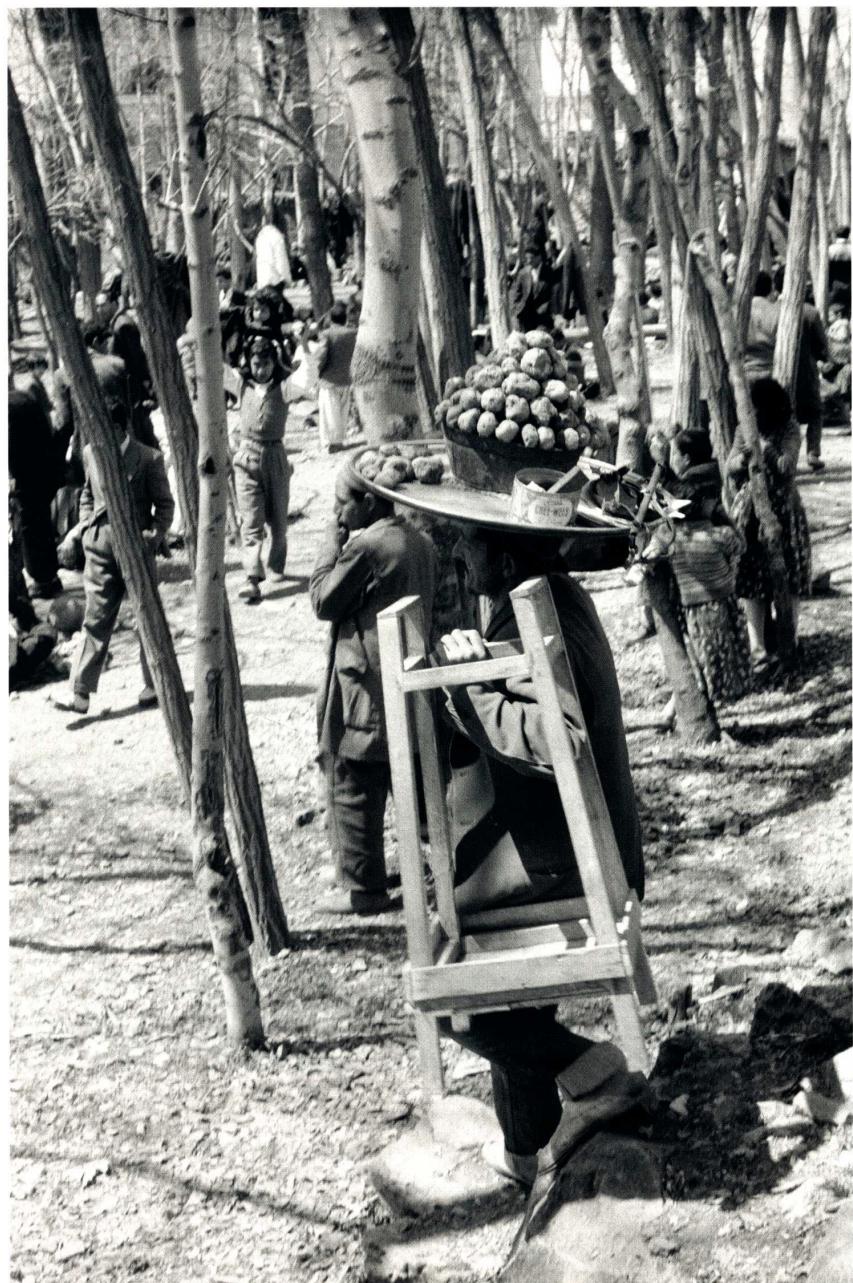
Nowruz reception, Golestan Palace. Queen Soraya greets members of the Cabinet in the Hall of Mirrors.



49

Nowruz reception, Golestan Palace. Members of the Cabinet kiss the hand of Queen Soraya after receiving the gift of a gold coin.

**Outside Tehran**



51

13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year, in the hills north of Tehran. Picnickers bring along carpets or blankets, pieces of grilled meat and bread, and a samovar for hot tea.



13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year. Some divert themselves by playing cards, others dance to the rhythm of tambourines or flutes.





13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year. Dancer.





13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year.





13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year. Near the source of the Ali, about ten miles south of Tehran.





Visitors to the Pepsi-Cola factory.





Shop display.





Industrial suburbs of Tehran. Brick factories with snow capped Elburz mountains in the distance.





Yakh-chal (ice house) in the village of Veramin, south-east of Tehran.





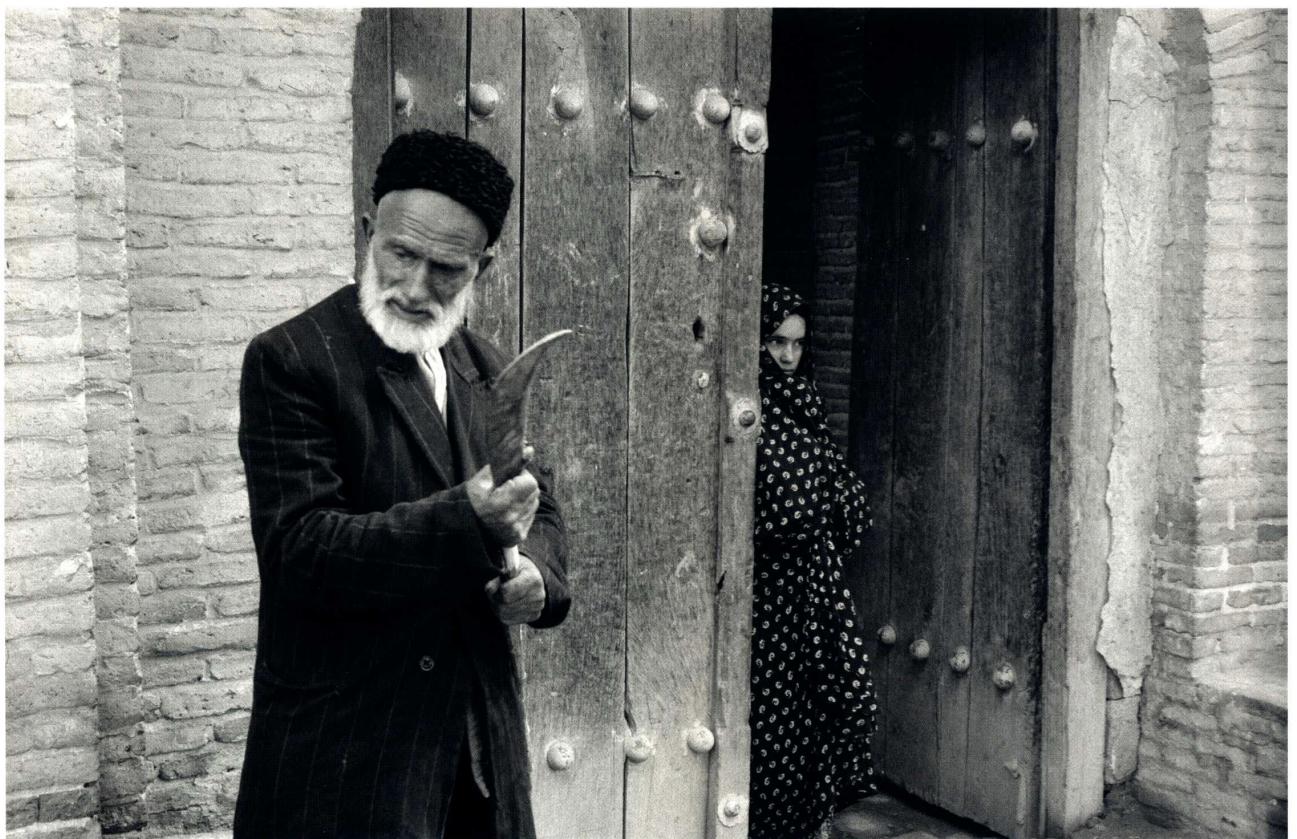
Mountain landscape, north of Tehran.

Rey



Street scene, on the way to Rey.





White bearded grandfather with a girl of his family.





Industrial quarters.



**Vanack**





Village of Vanack.





Woman baking bread on hot stones.

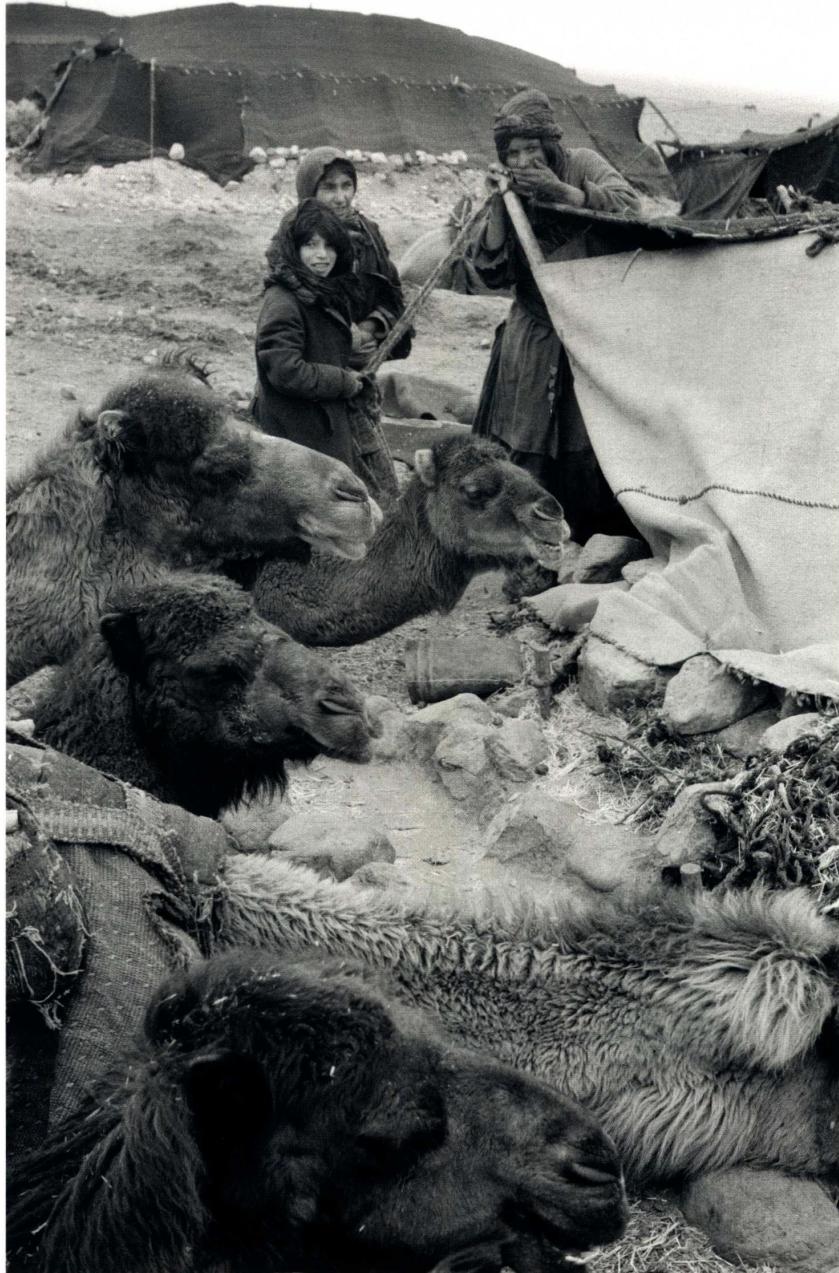


Near Karaj





The nomads live in black wool tents, use camels to carry their loads, and raise Karakul lambs for their wool and pelts.





Nomads.



**Qazvin**



Old gate of Qazvin.



The center of Qazvin.



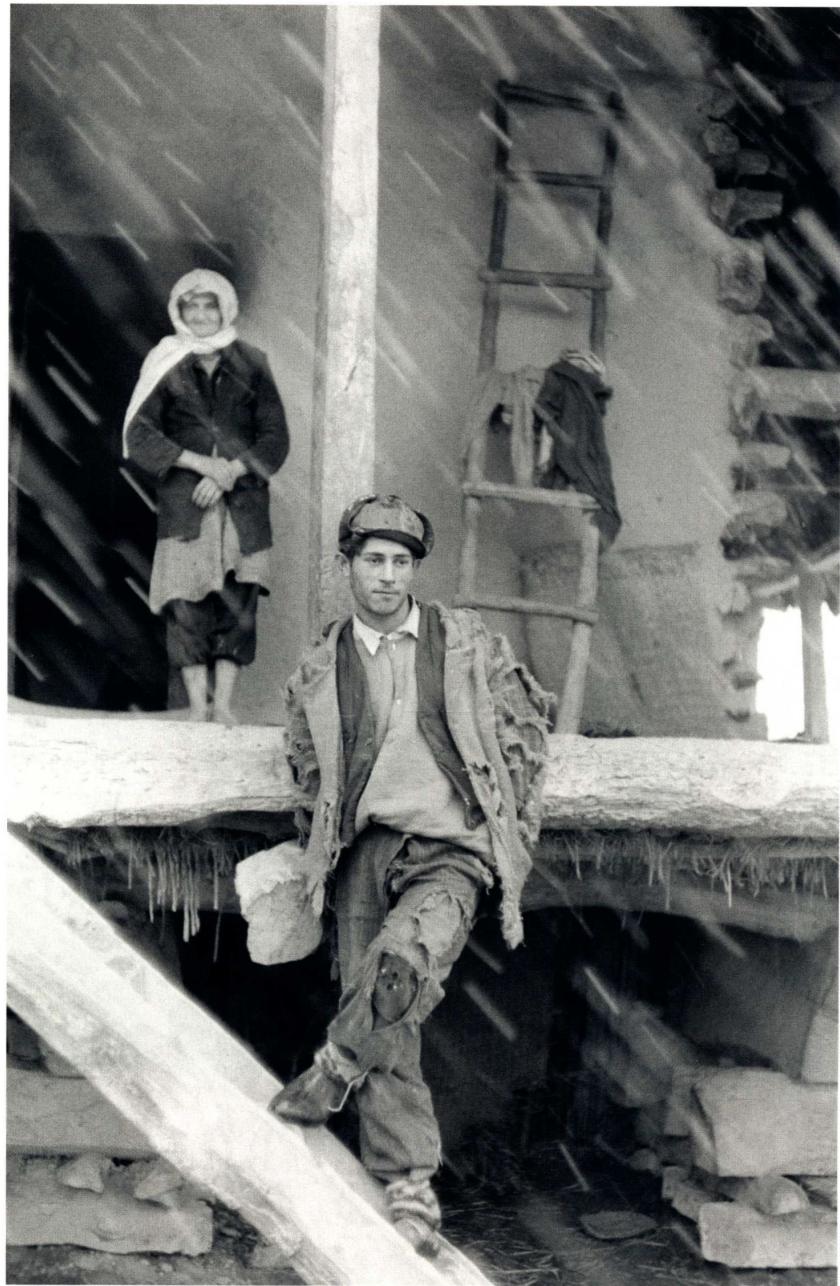
**Rasht and Port Pahlavi**





Fishermen at Port Pahlavi, a famous caviar fishing site.





Peasant boy and his mother on the snow covered porch of their home, near Rasht.



**Near Chalus**





A mountain village.





Opium smoker in a dark corner of a tea house in the Elburz Mountains. Opium smoking is forbidden, but one can still smell its sweet, scented smoke in many houses and tea houses.

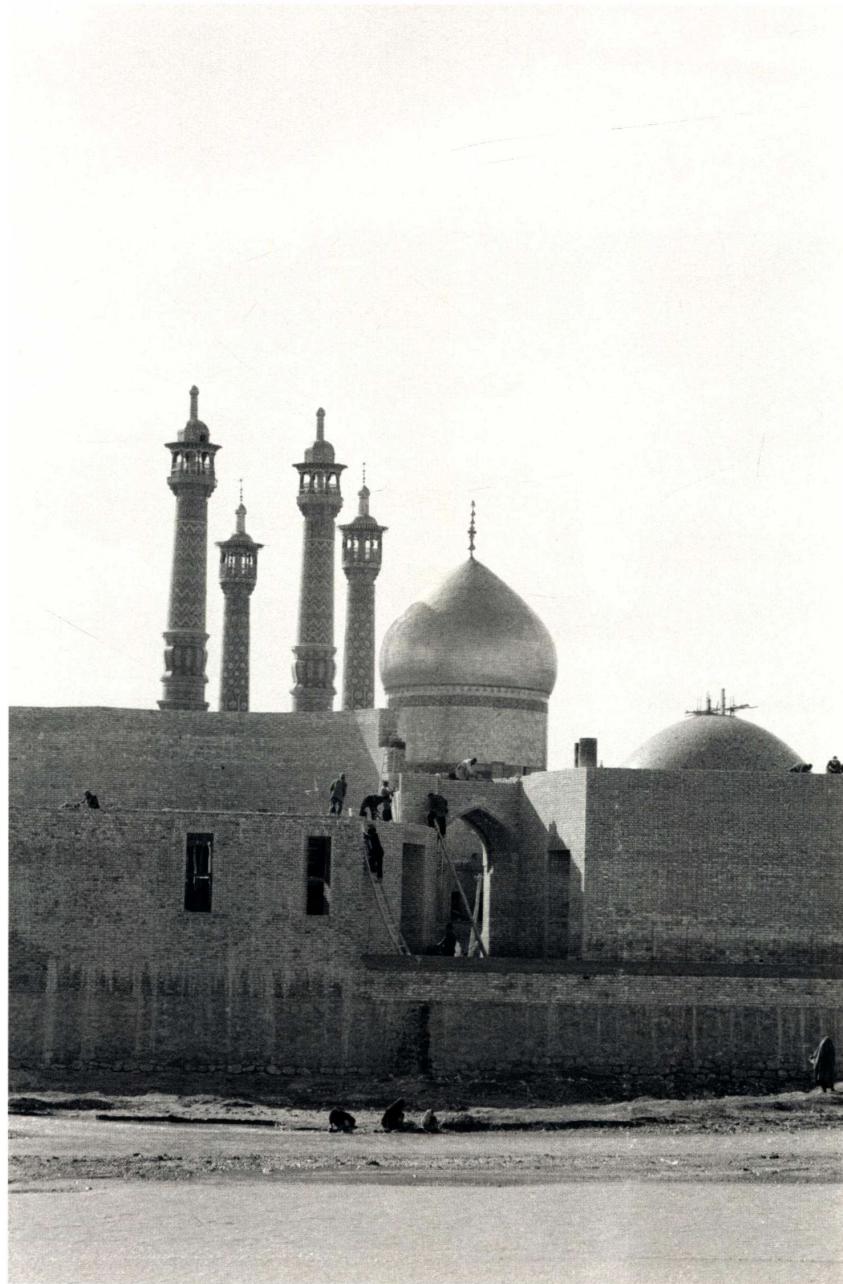


Q' um





Outside Q'um.



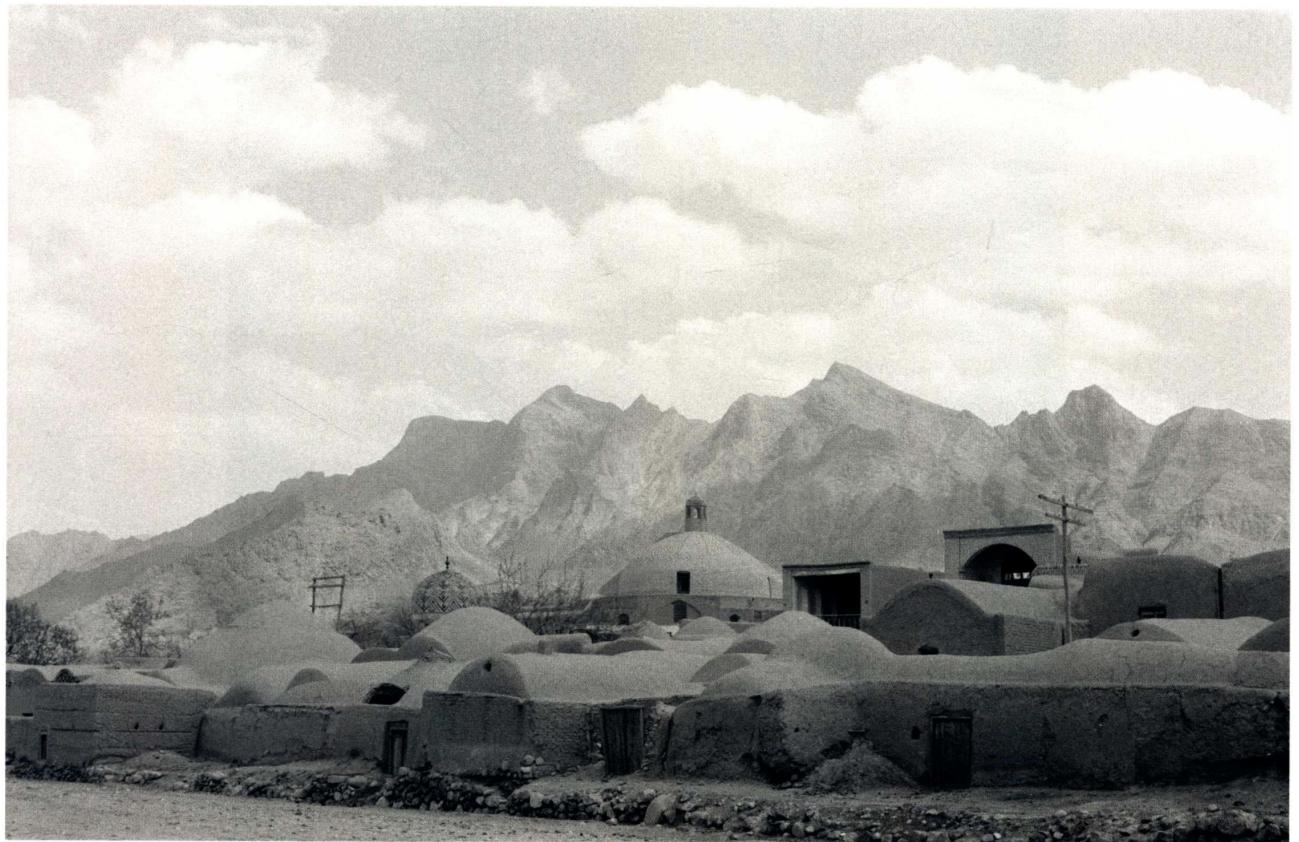


The Shrine of Fatema, photographed from a rooftop as it was impossible to go closer.

**Taft, Natanz, and Kashan**



Ruins outside the village of Taft.





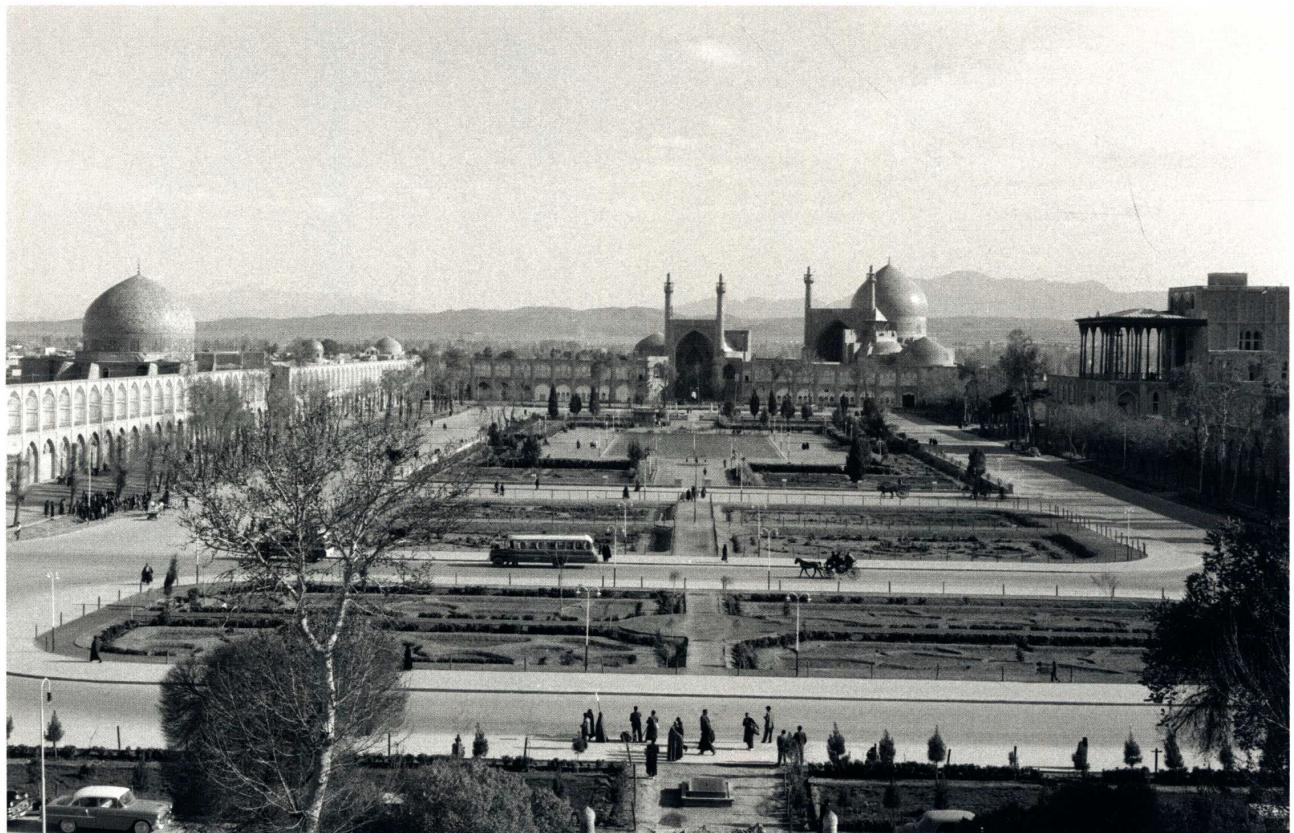
Villagers sifting grain in front of a ceremonial structure that will be carried on Ashura.





Ruins outside Kashan.

**Isfahan**

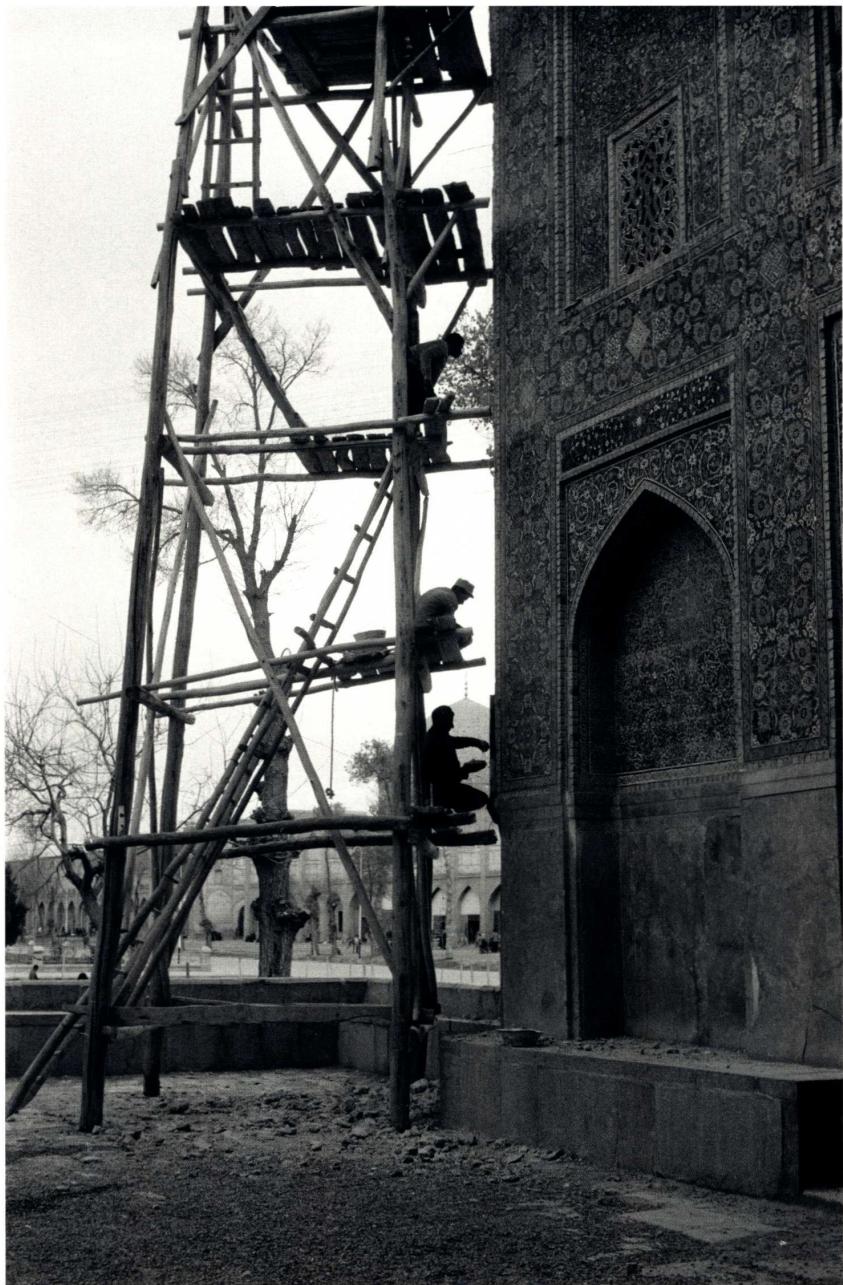


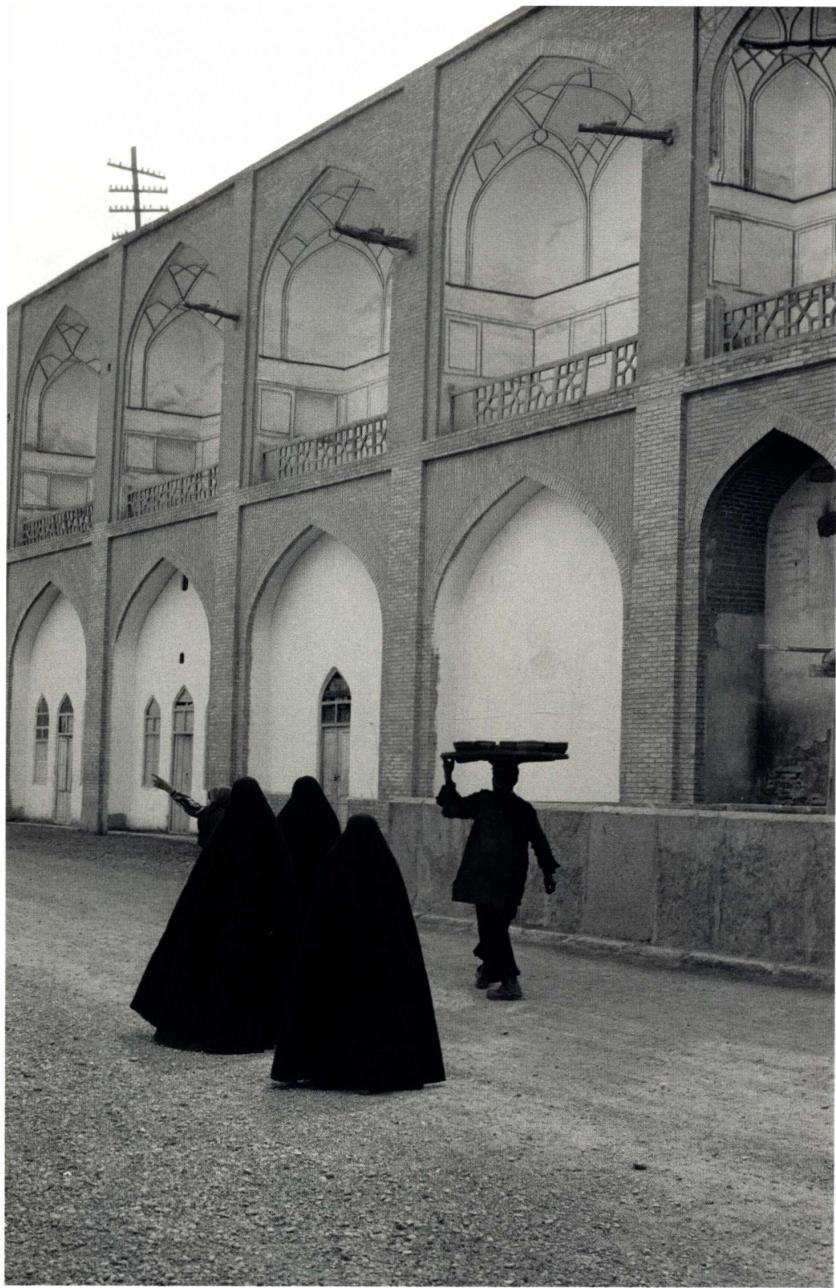
View of Maidan-i Shah, Isfahan's famous square, built by Shah Abbas the Great. The palace on the right is the Ali Qapu, in the background is the Mosque of the Shah, and on the left is the Mosque of Sheikh Loft Allah.





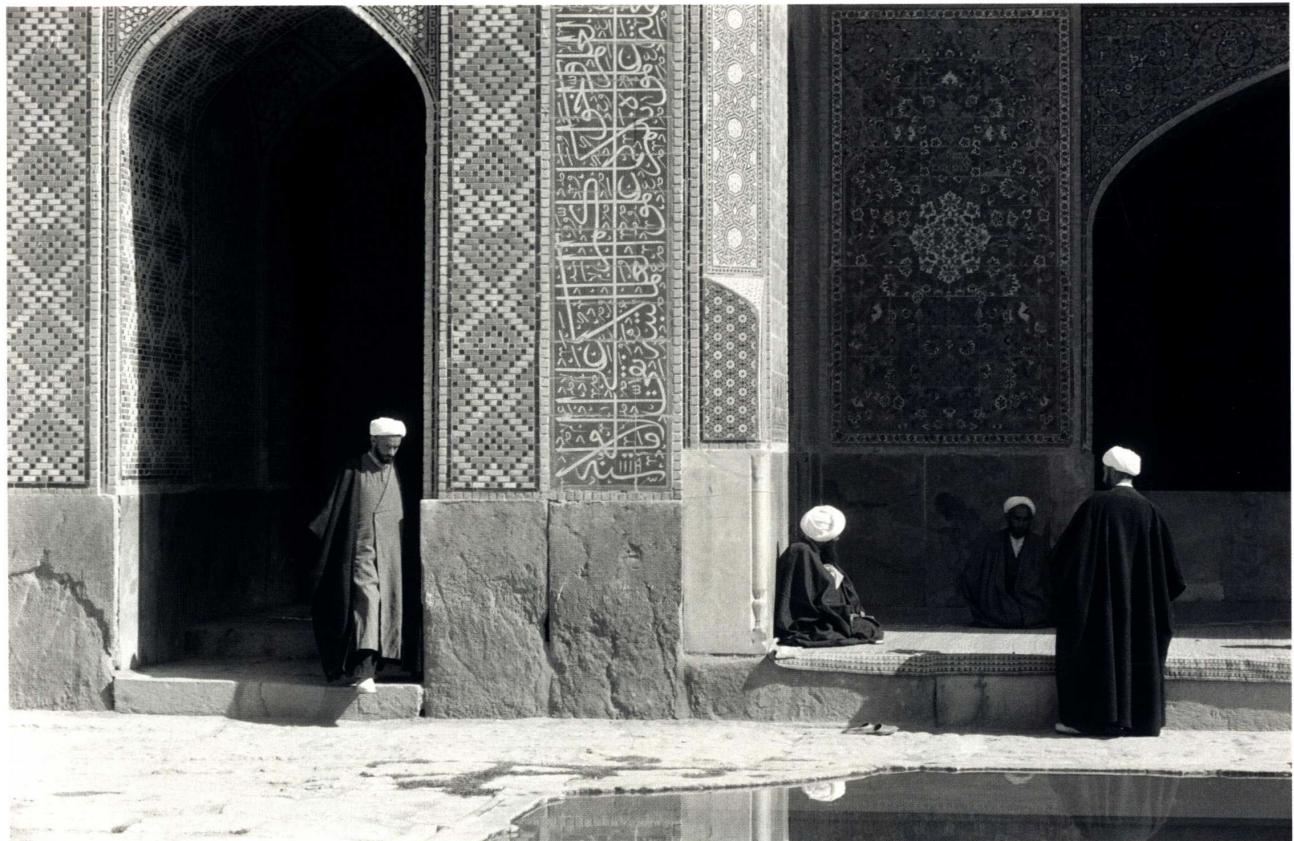
Courtyard and portal, Masjid-i Shah.



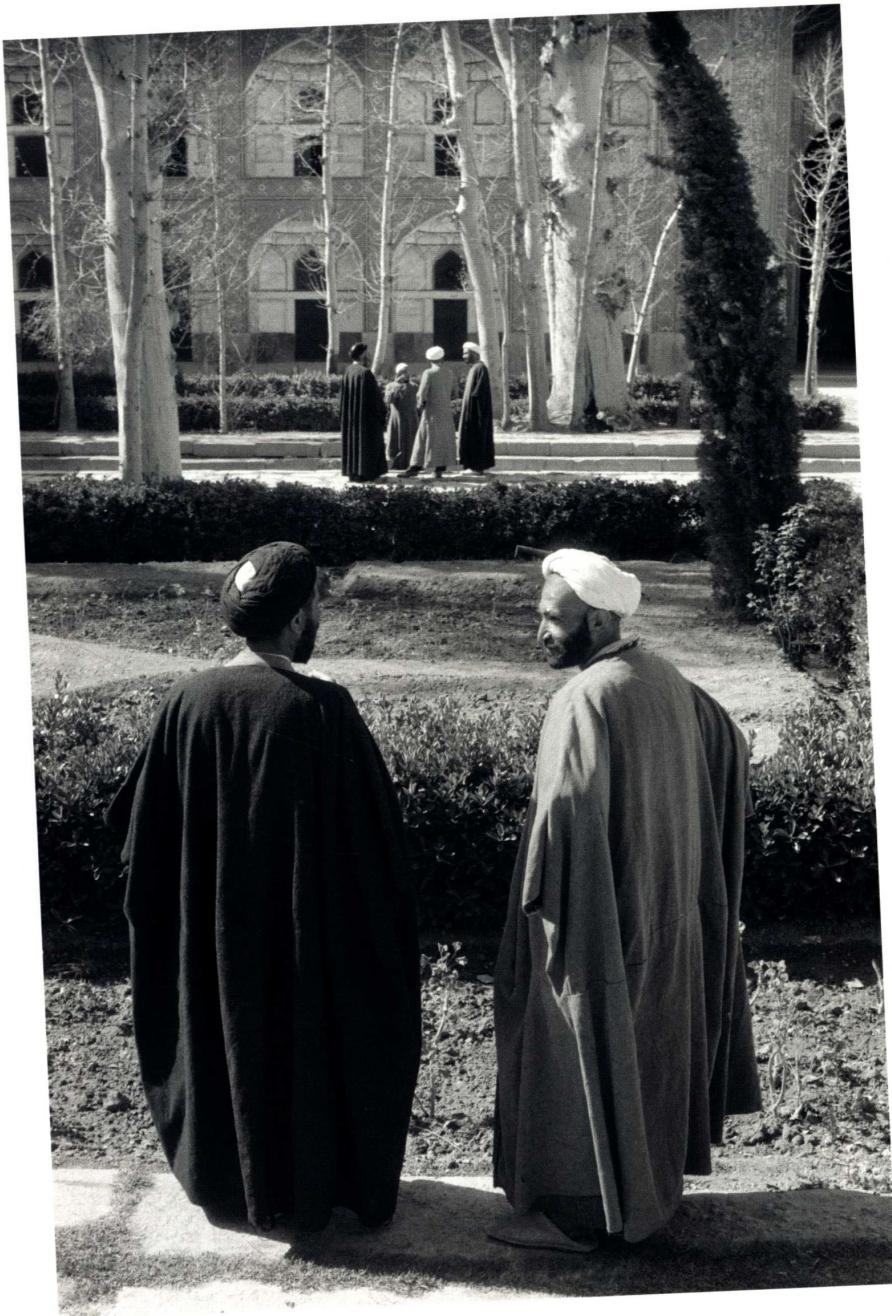


Maidan-i Shah.

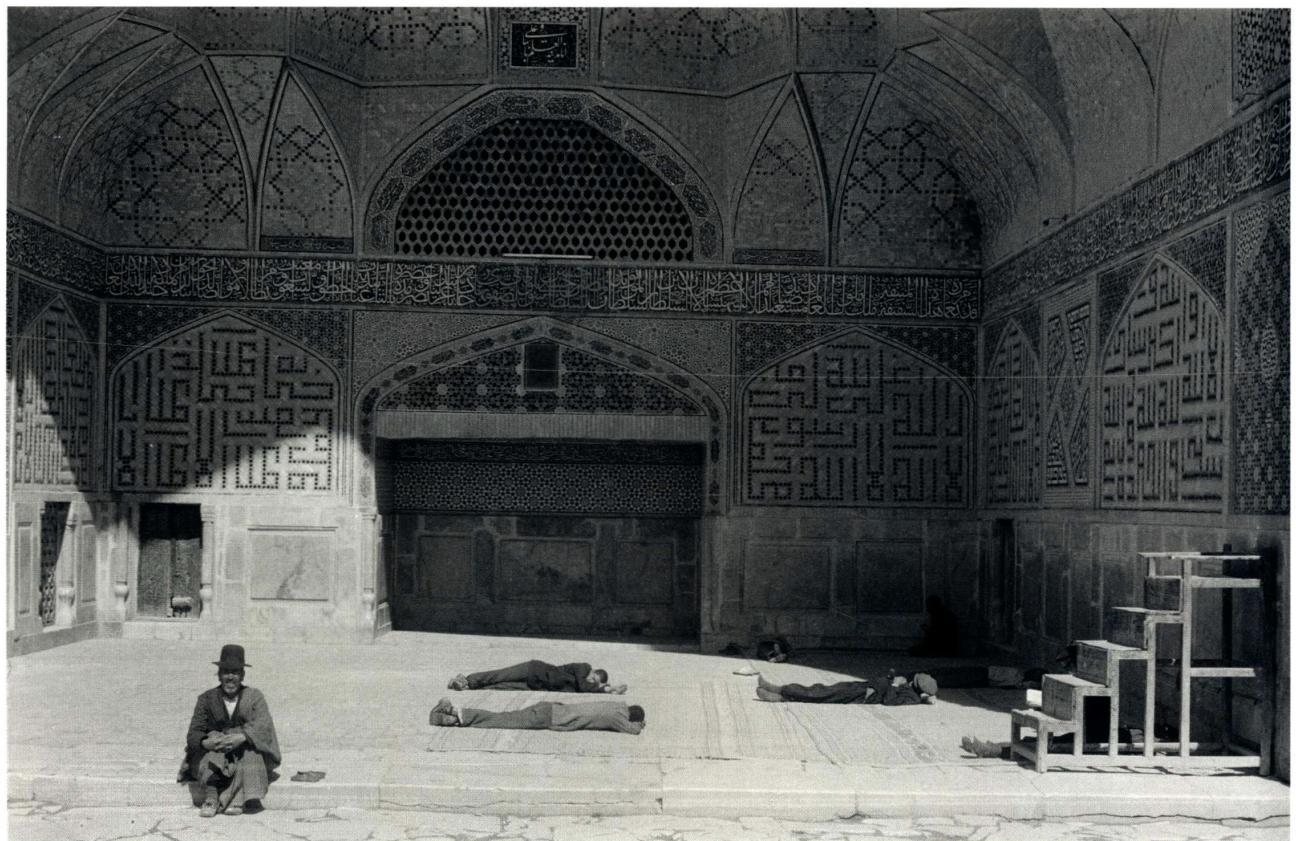




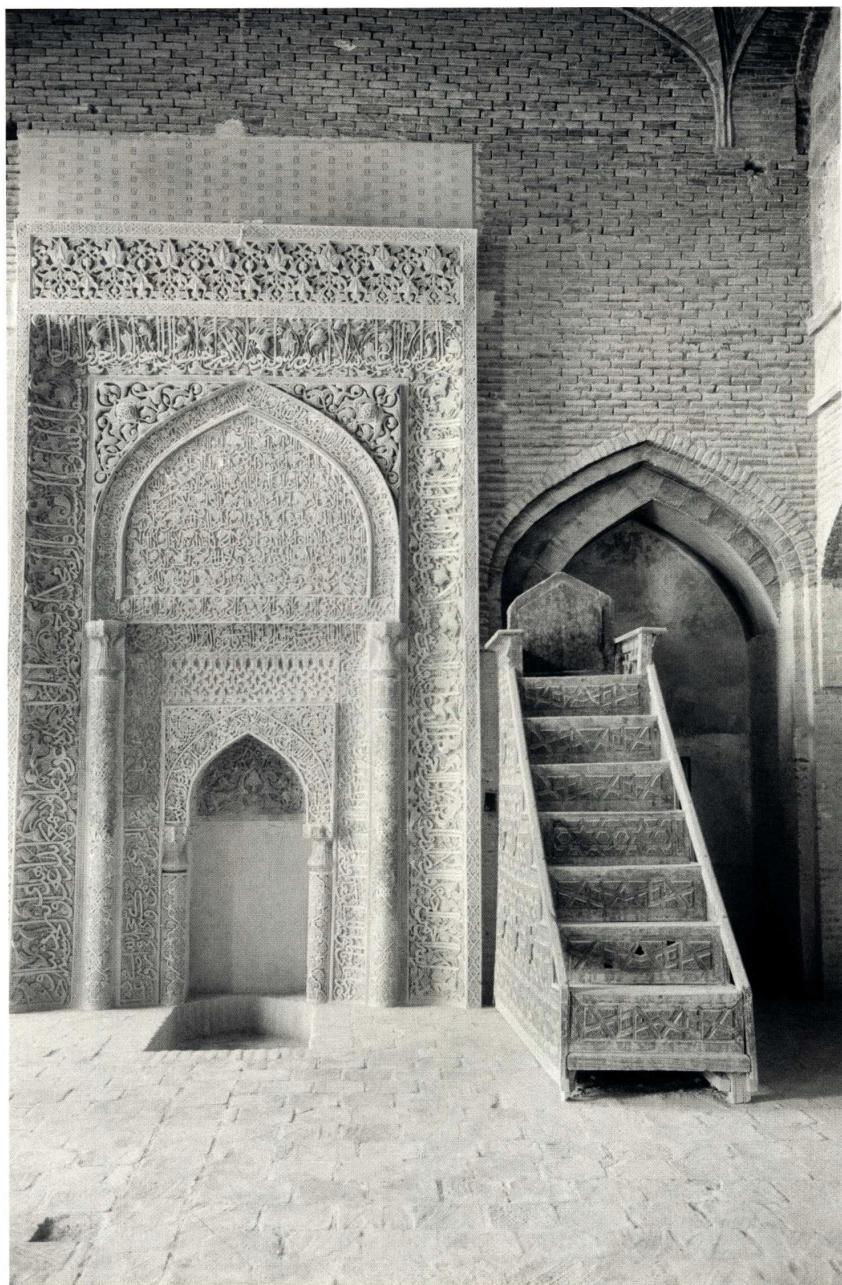
Madar-i Shah Mosque, which now serves as a madrasa (theological school).



Mullahs, Muslim clerics, are easily recognizable by their white or black turbans.



Muslims sleeping, praying, and reading the Koran during the month of Ramadan, inside one of the huge iwans (prayer porches) of the Friday Mosque.

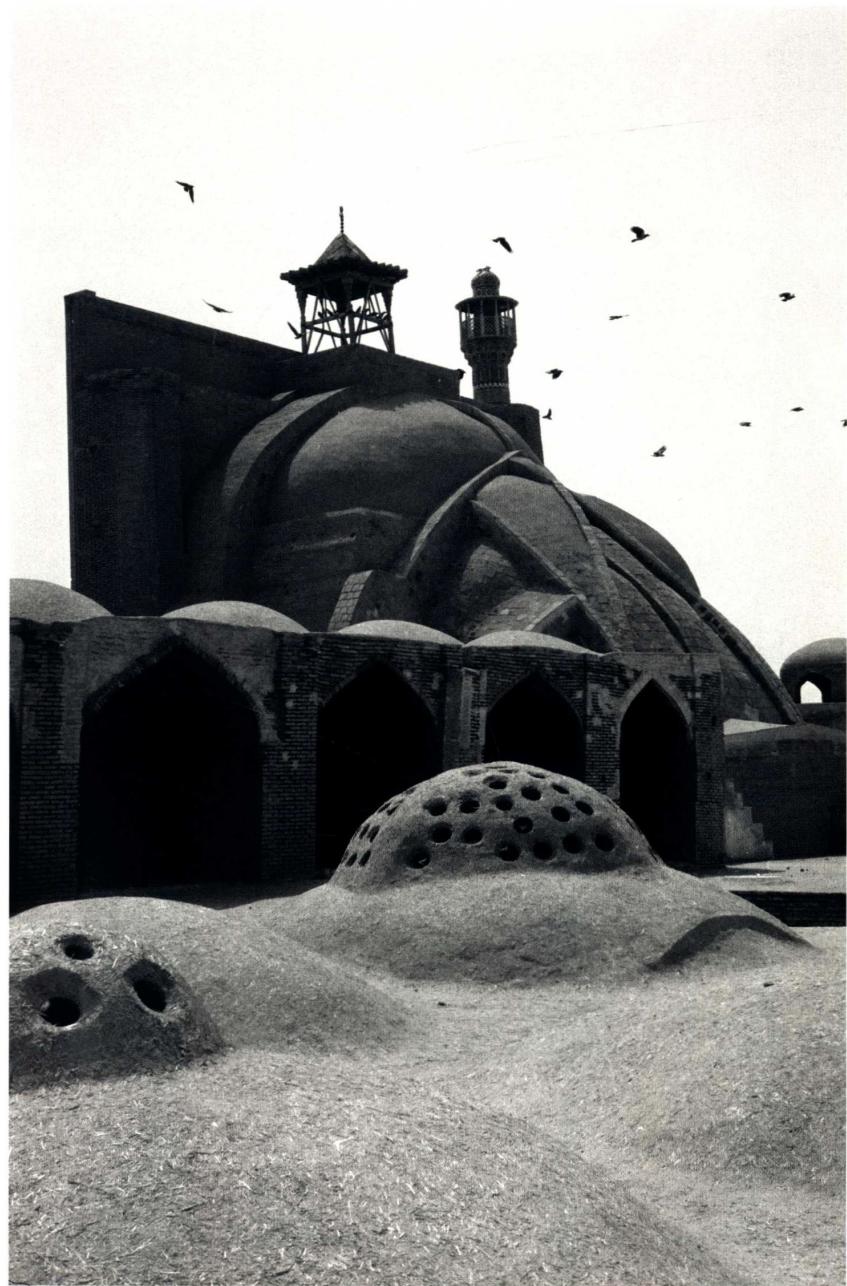


125

Mihrab (prayer niche) and minbar (pulpit) in the Friday Mosque. The delicate work of the prayer niche is in plaster. The carved wooden steps of the minbar lead up to the pulpit.



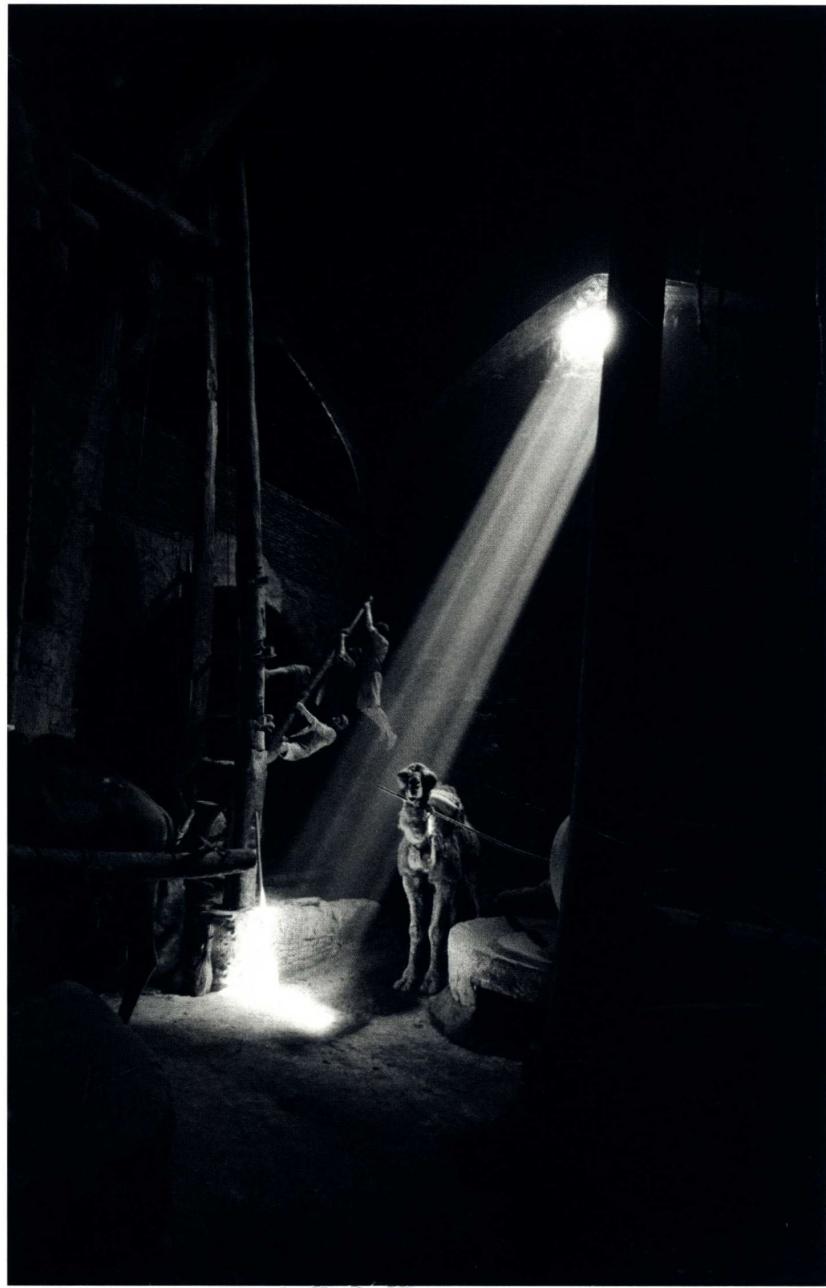
View of the courtyard from the roof of the Friday Mosque.



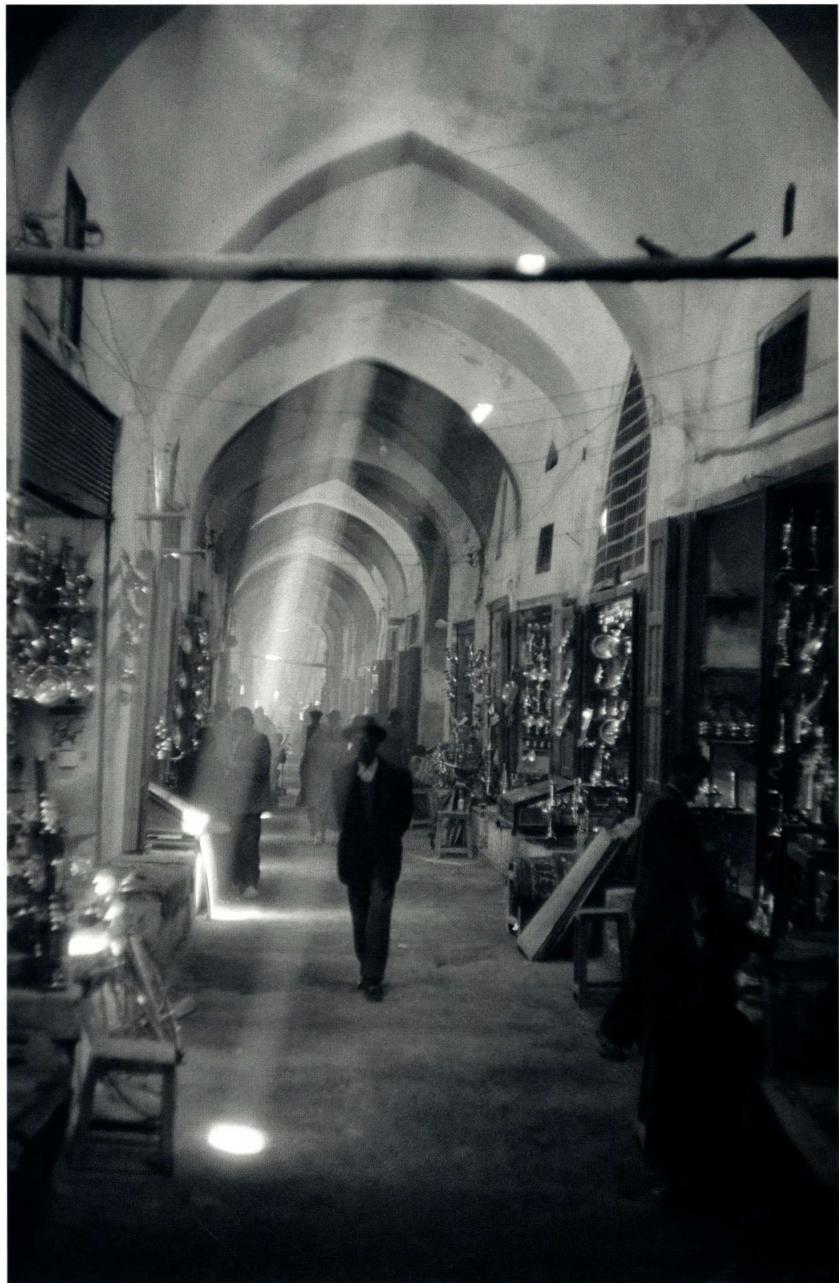


Rooftops.





In a dark basement under the bazaar, two camels with bandaged eyes walk round and round, turning the old grindstones of a strong smelling oil mill.



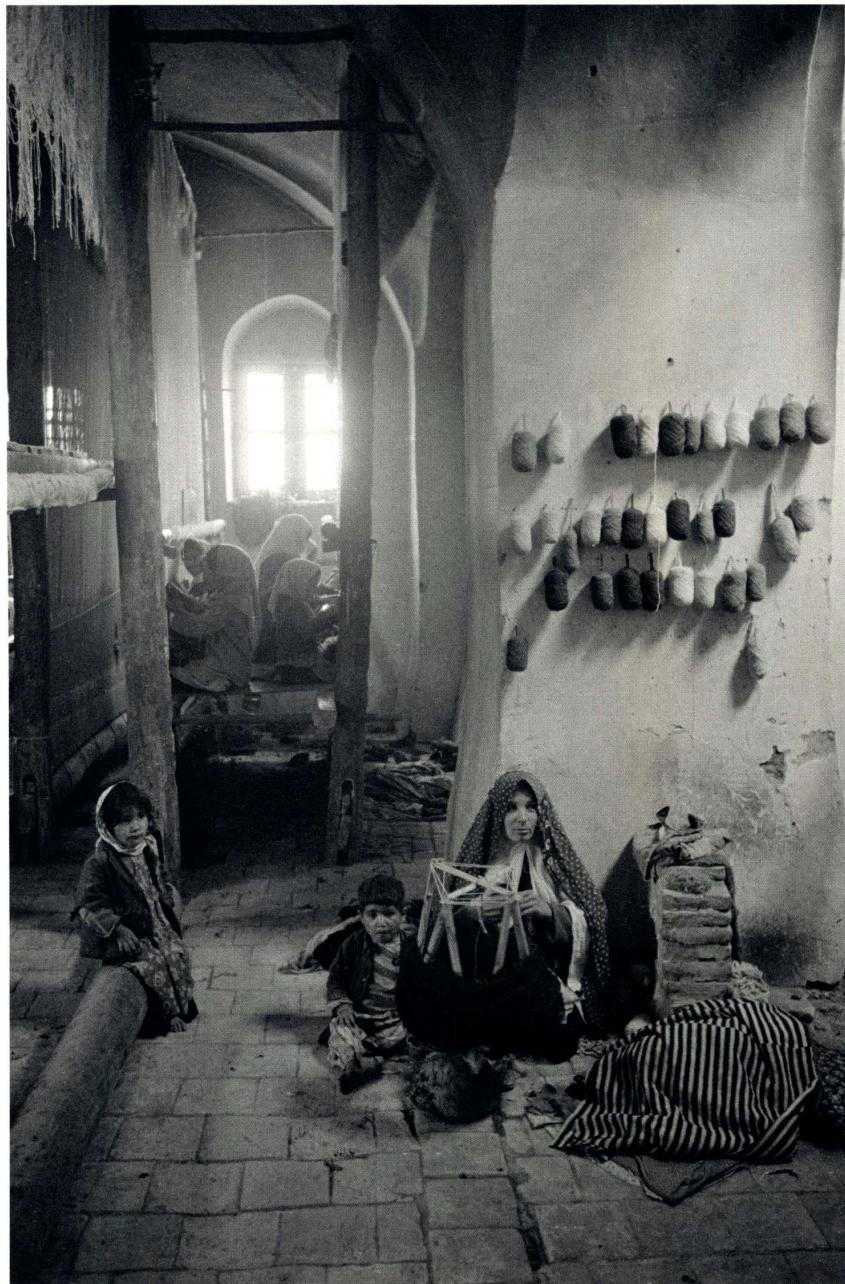


Carpet washing in the Zayandeh River.



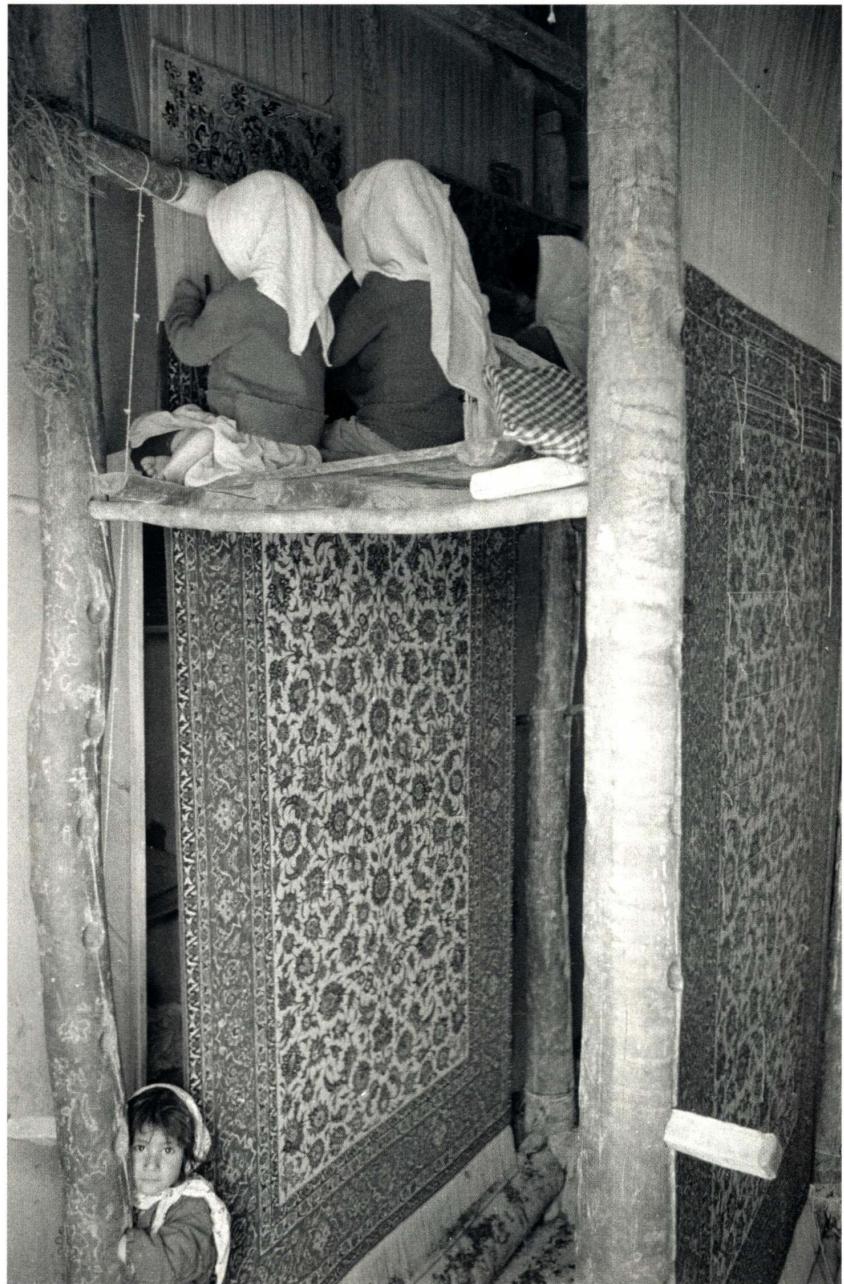


Inside many homes in Isfahan families keep their own looms, used by mothers and children to produce colorful fabrics later sold in the bazaars.





Carpet workshop.





Most of the women and girls have henna stained palms, which hardens the skin and protects them from painful cuts.





Carpet making in an Isfahan home.





Inside one of the modern cotton mills of Isfahan, the Shabnaz Factory. Founded in the early 1950s, it has 800 workers working night and day to produce 2,000 ten pound bundles of cotton daily.





Dyed wool drying.



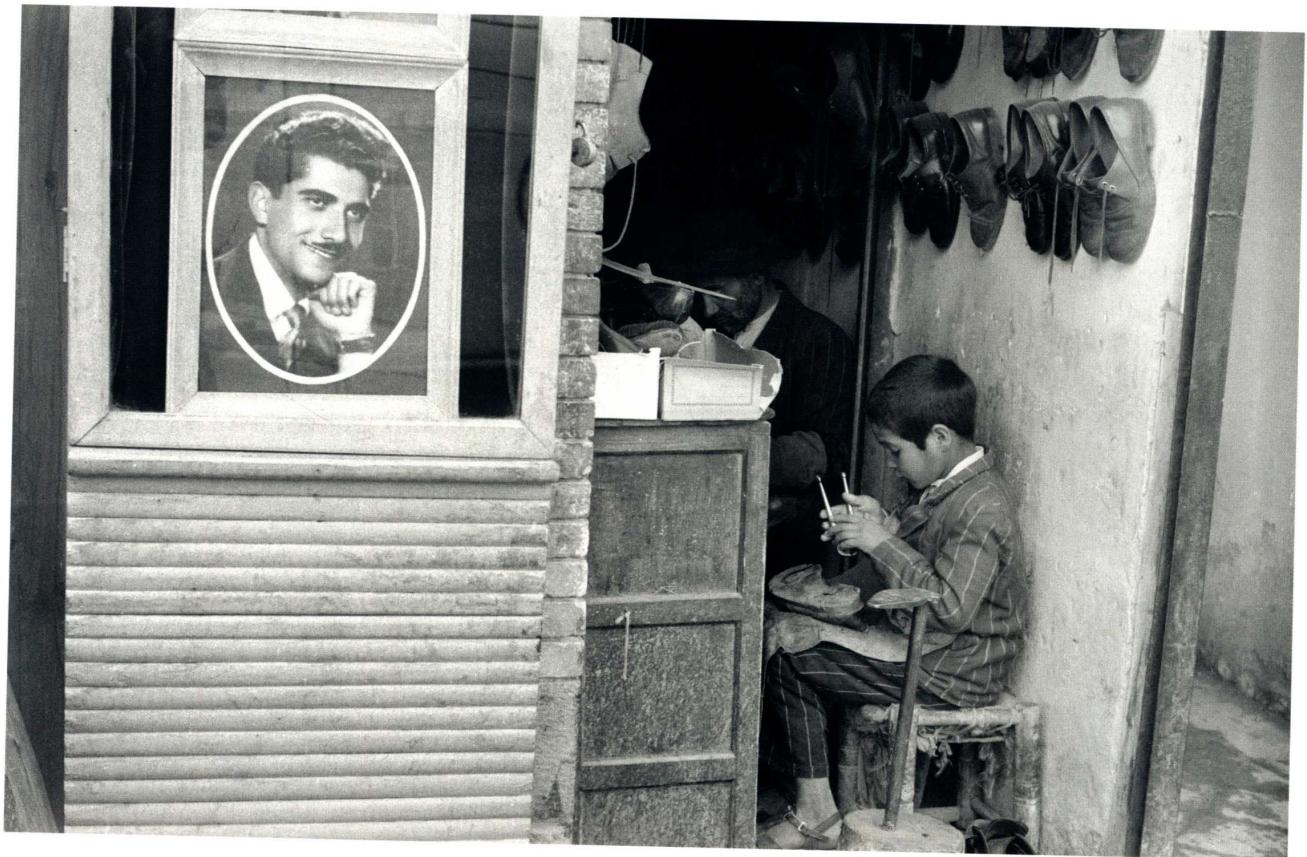


Coal merchant.





Shop selling lamps and sewing machines.





Boy drummer and musician in a courtyard.





Tea service by the Khaju Bridge, built by Shah Abbas II. A barricade against floods, the Isfahanis come to enjoy the coolness of the water.



**Yazd**





Craftsmen making looms in a workshop.





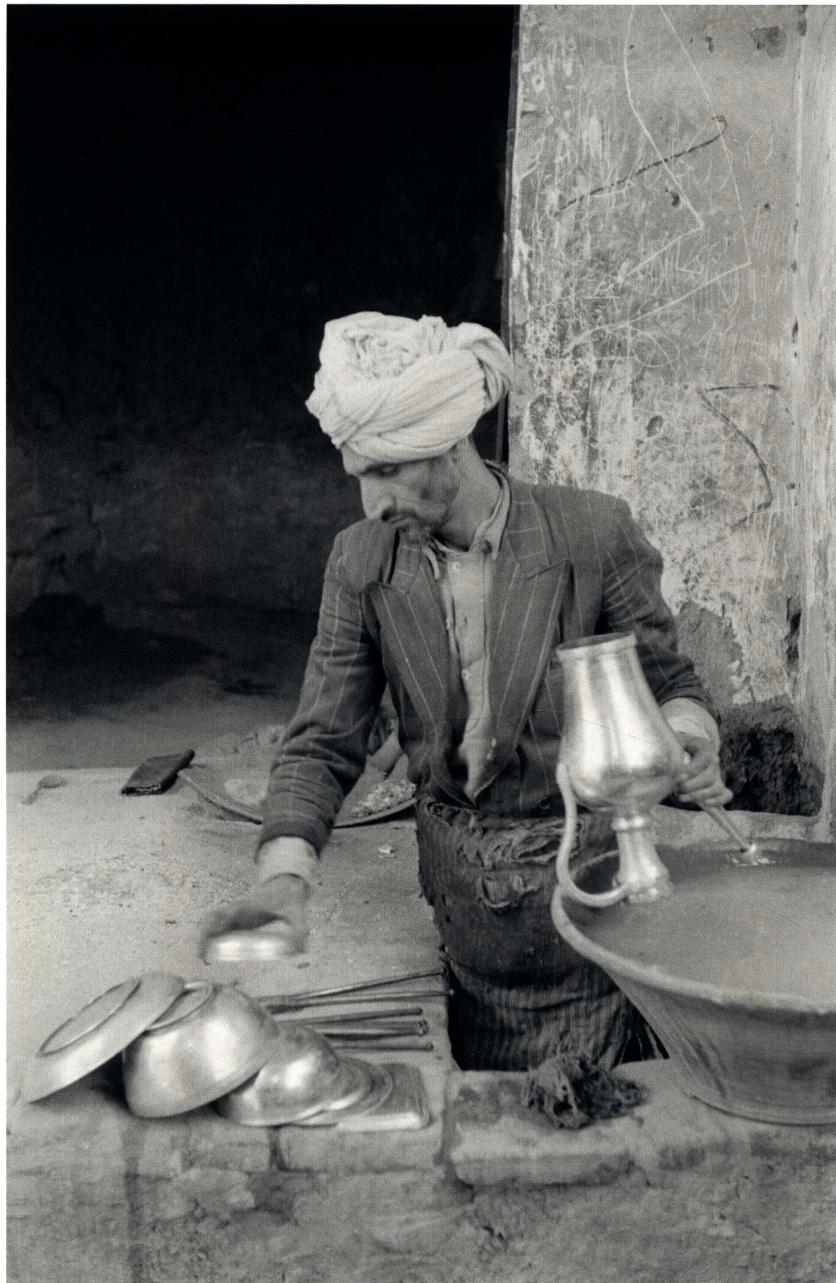
Silk loom in a Yazd home.



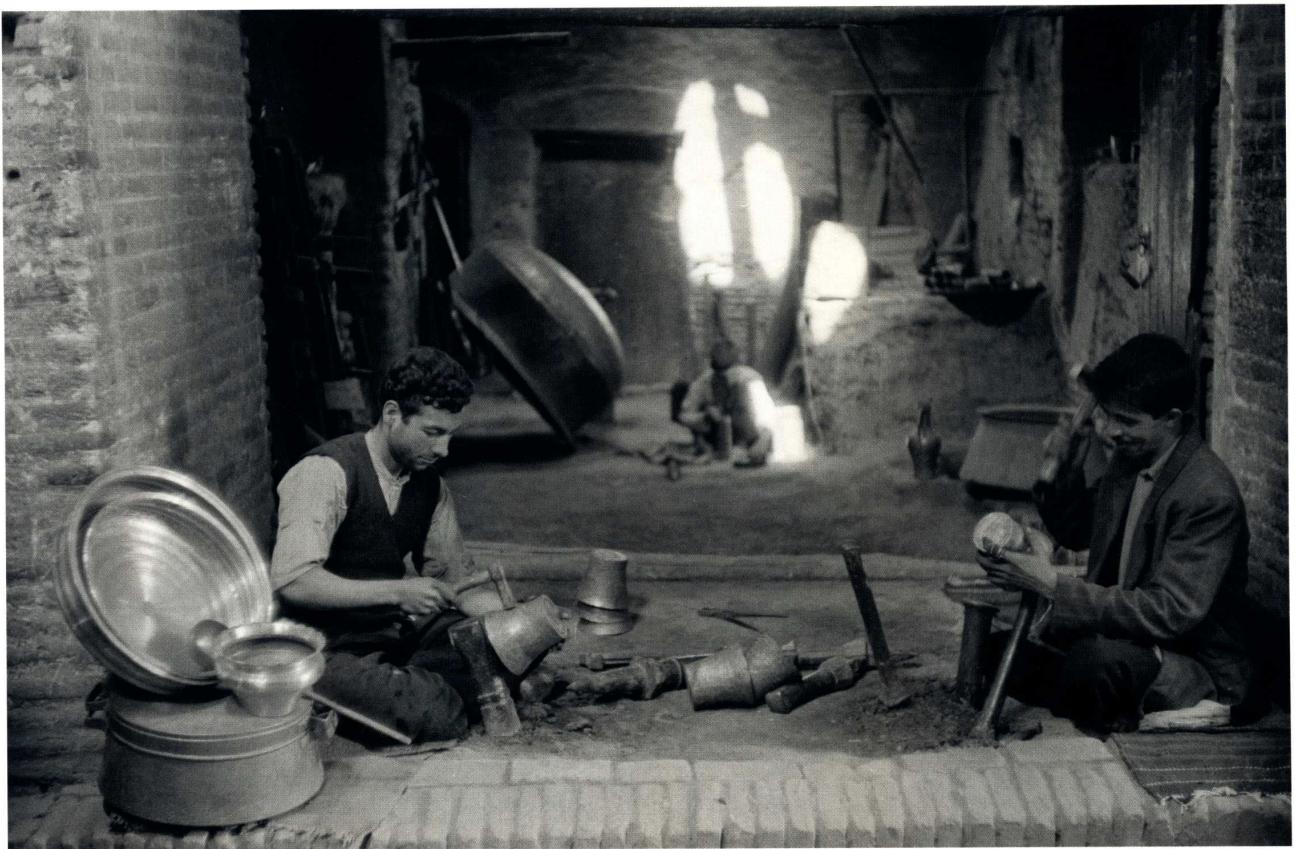


Coppersmith's workshop. One holds the hot metal while five assistants beat it into shape.





Coppersmith's workshop.





Narrow street leading to the Mosque.





Two Muslim women in chadors and one woman in Zoroastrian dress.



167

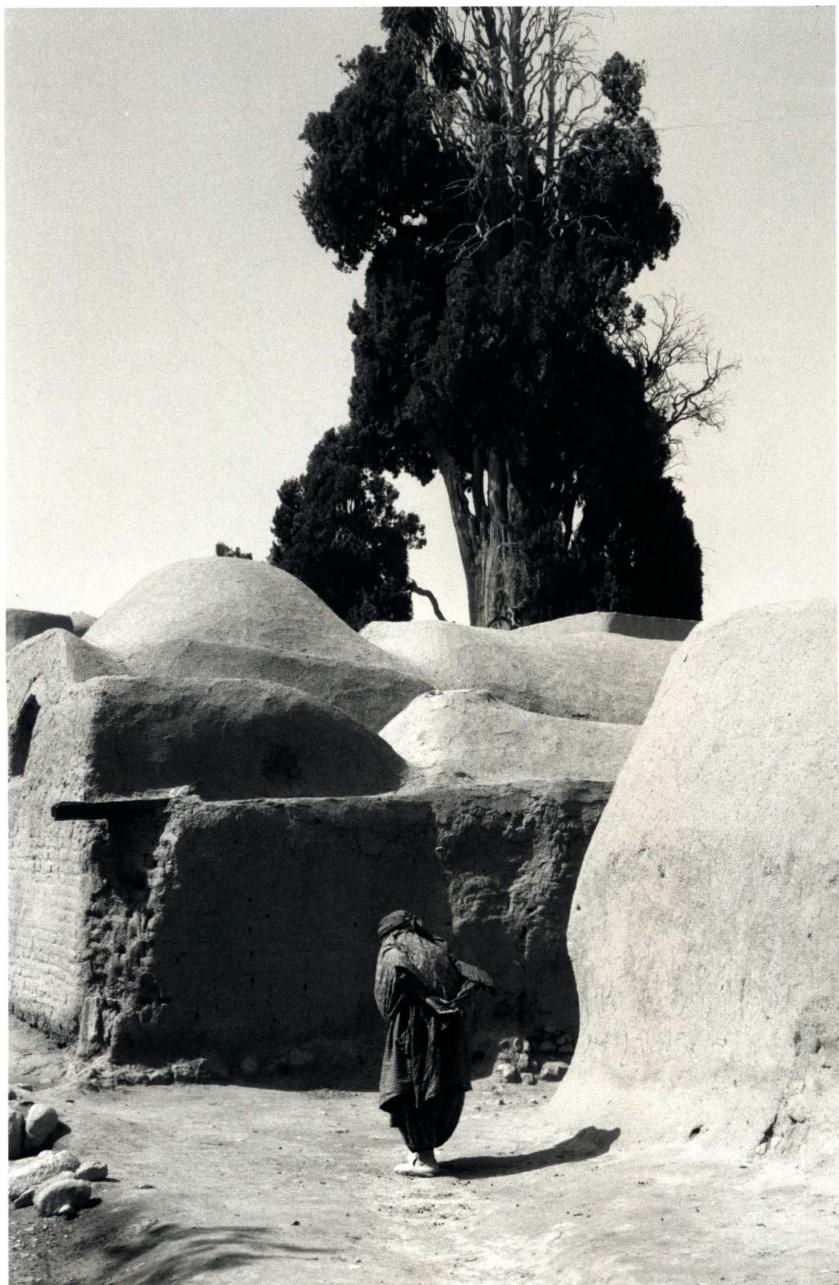
Zoroastrian priest saying daily prayers next to the huge vessel of holy fire that has burned in Yazd for 2,000 years. It is fuelled with the wood of fruit trees.



Ateshgah (fire temple) of a Zoroastrian chapel near Chum.



**Chum**



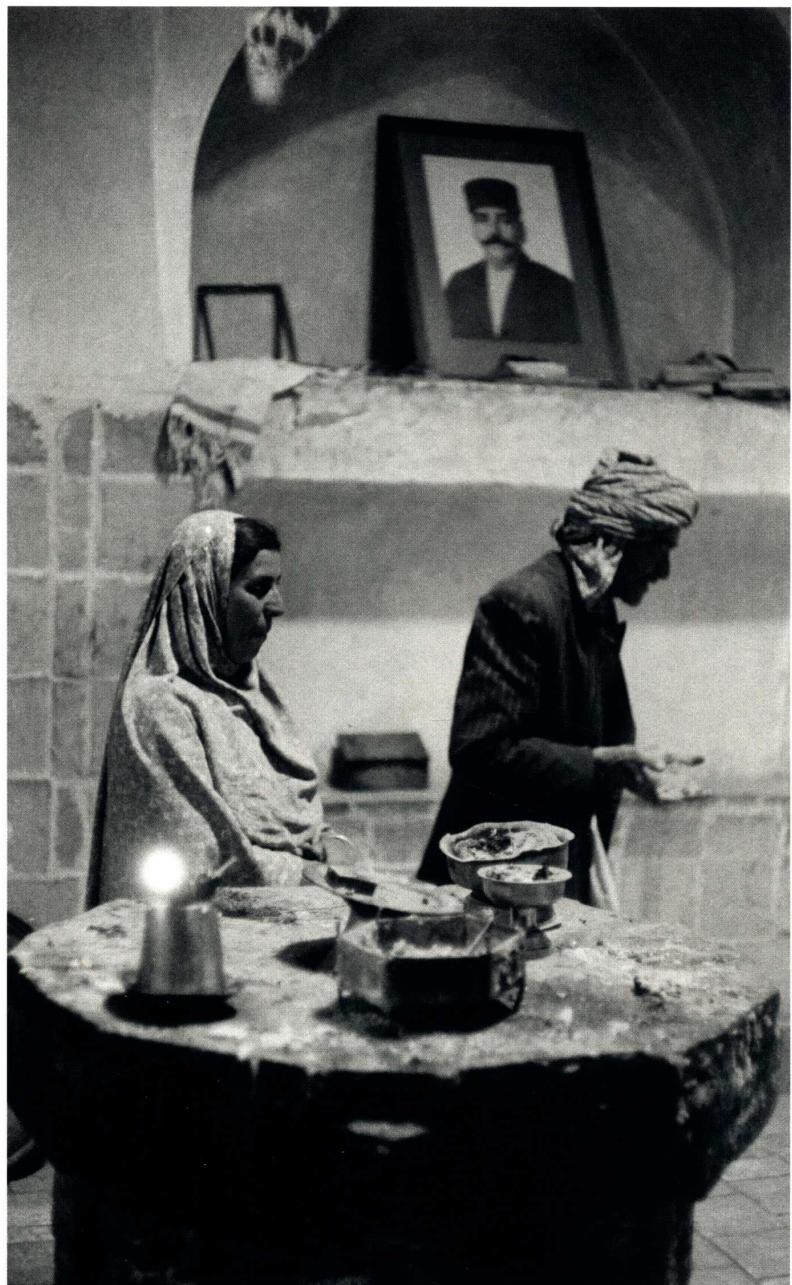


A small altar under the sacred cypress tree in Chum. Two candles burn in front of a silver vessel filled with aromatic ashes.



173

Inside the fire temple. On the small brick altar, next to the ashes of aromatic herbs, burns the sacred fire. Every day a man or woman from the community comes to watch over it, fueling it with branches from a fruit tree and specially prepared oil.



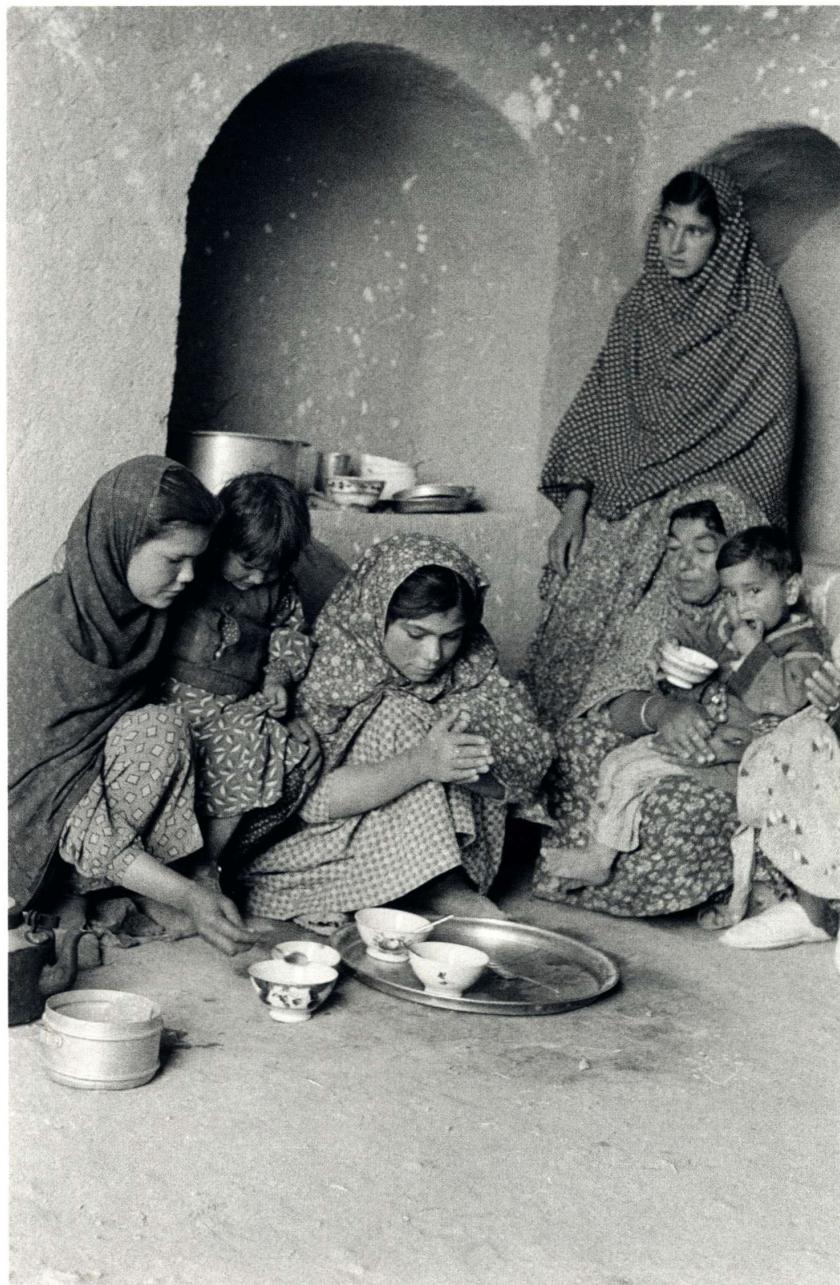
Inside the fire temple.

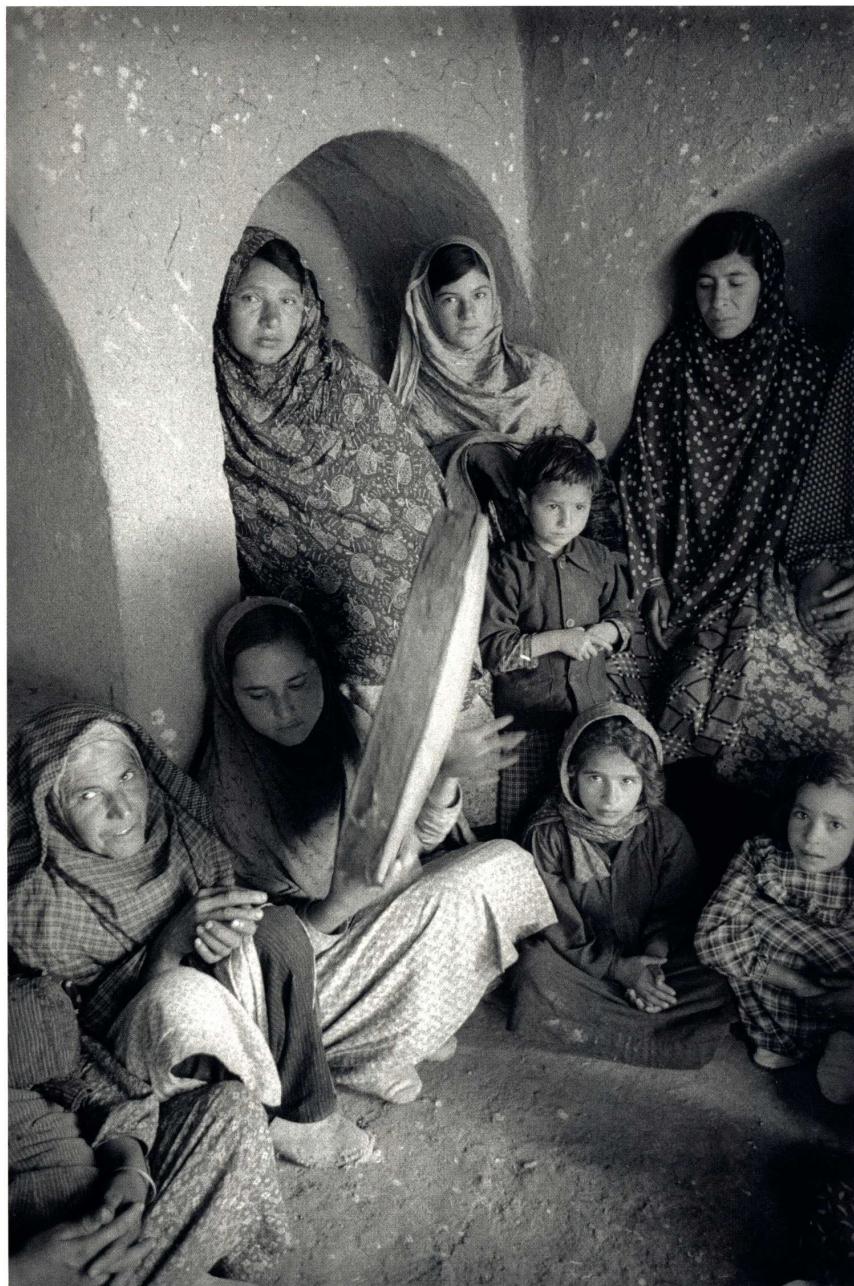


Zoroastrian ceremony in a village near Chum. The ceremony is held by a woman who made a vow to give food to all the women and children in the village once a year. While they were eating and drinking tea, a small candle burned inside a hole in the wall, as fire must be present in all Zoroastrian ceremonies.



Food was cooked in large kettles on an open hearth, and six or seven women ate out of one large dish placed before them.



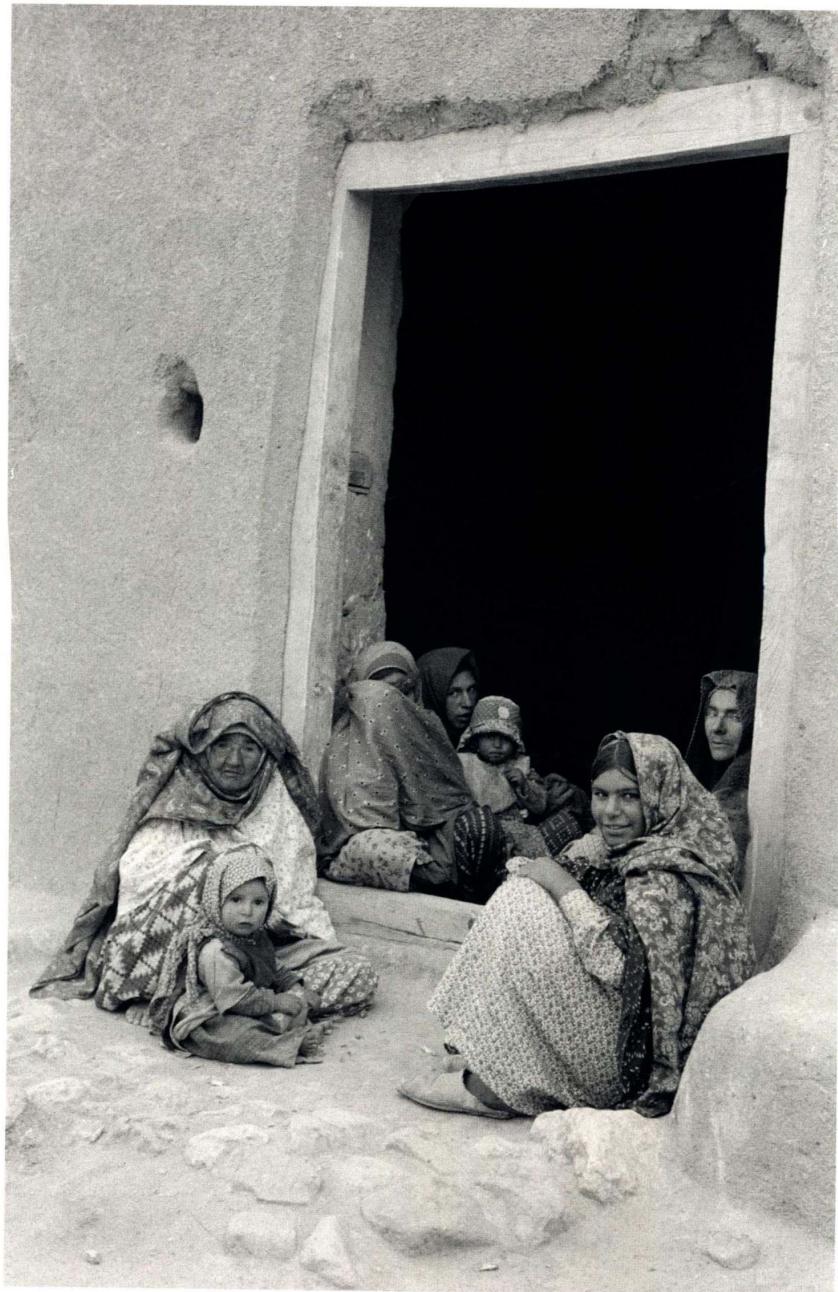


At times the women sang to the rhythm of a large tambourine. The ceremony lasted three or four hours.





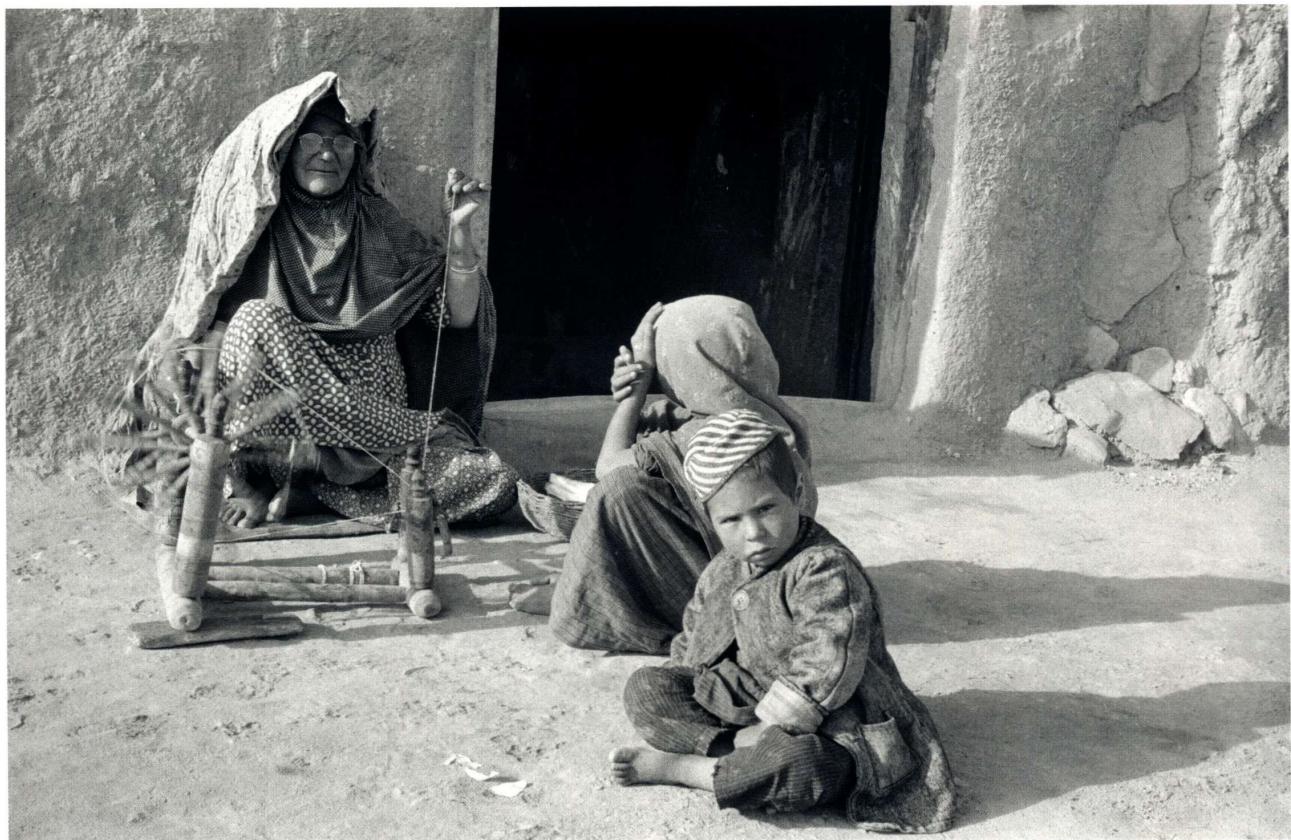
Interior of a Zoroastrian home.





Zoroastrian women washing dishes in the brook that runs through their village.





Spinning.



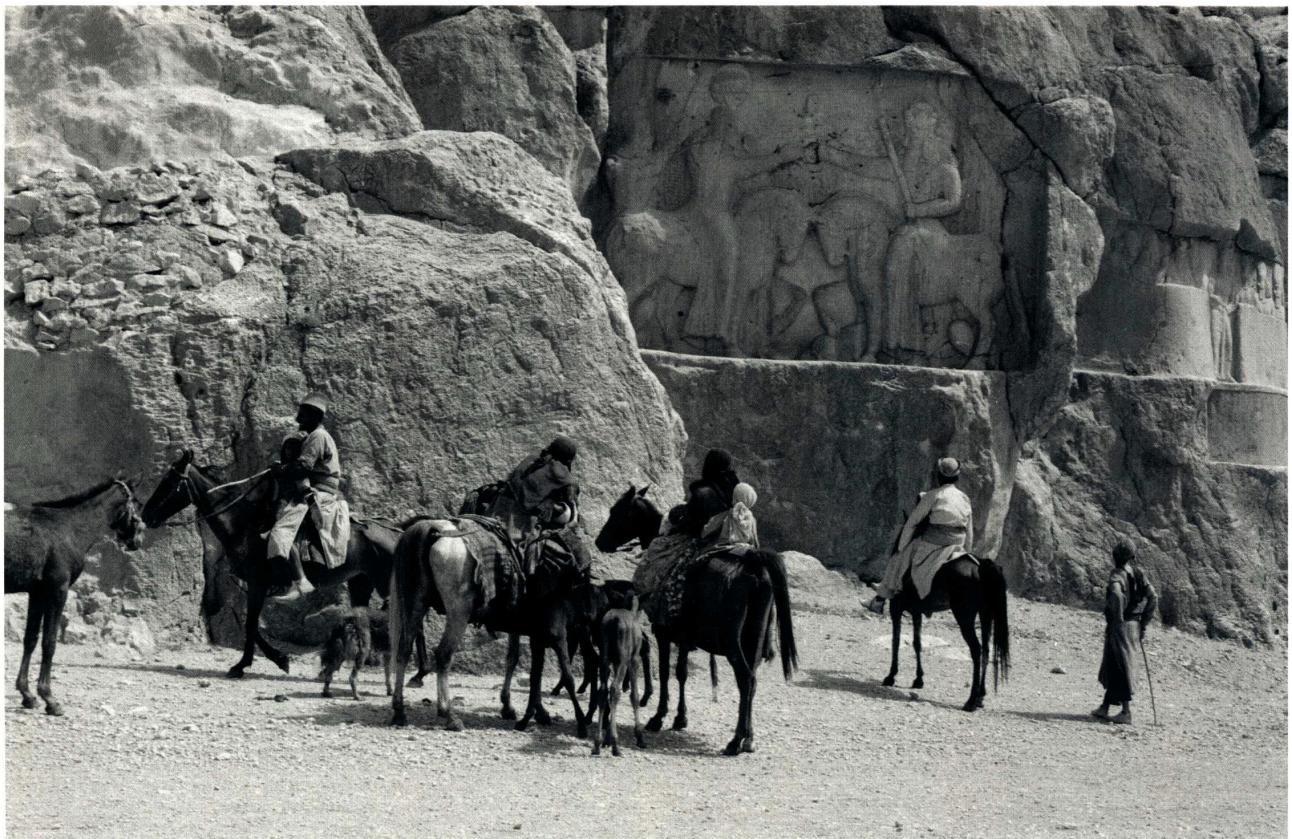
Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rustam,  
and Pasargadae





The ruins of Persepolis. The hall of the Apadana Palace.



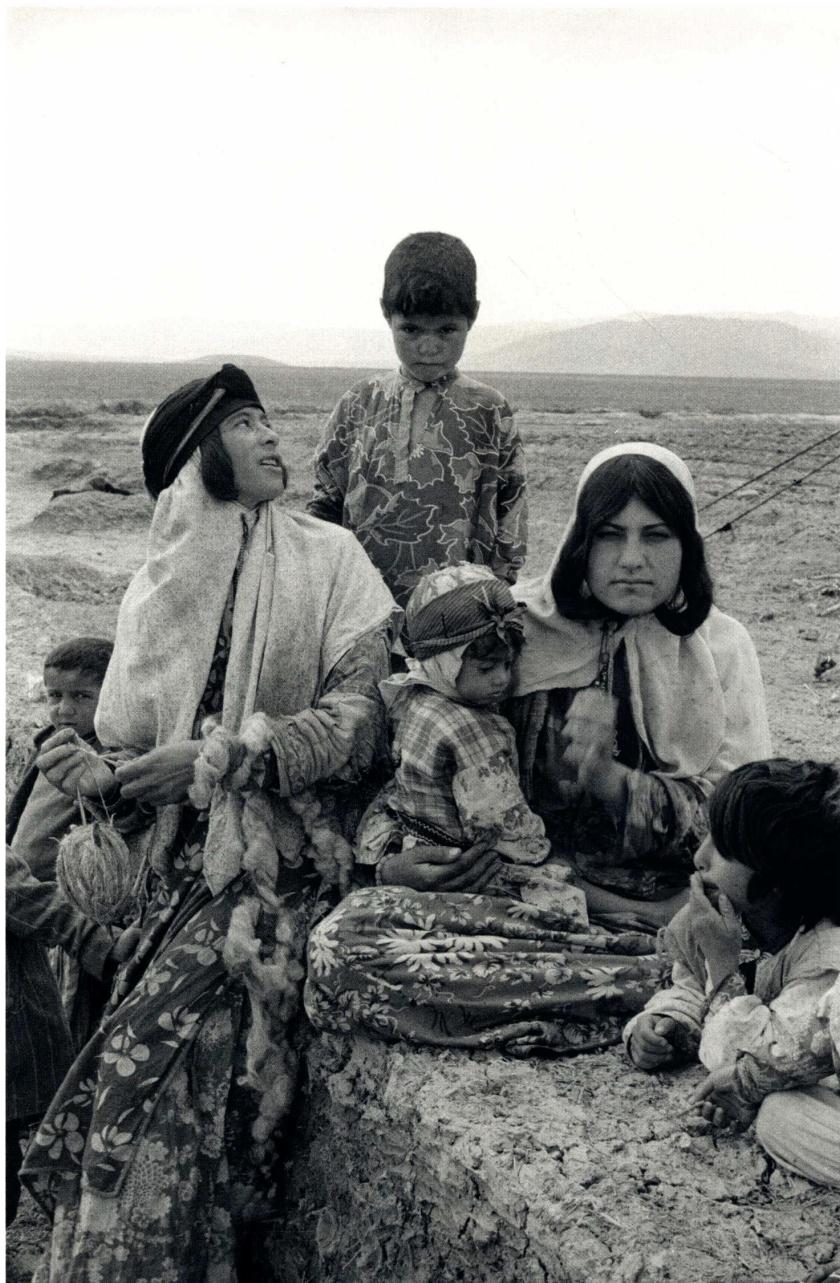


Naqsh-e Rustam. Qashqa'i nomads by a relief depicting the investiture of Ardashir, founder of the Sassanid Dynasty.



191

Pasargadae. Qashqa'i nomad near the Tomb of Cyrus.



Pasargadae. Qashqa'i nomads near the Tomb of Cyrus.





Qashqa'i woman wearing bridal headdress, with turquoise studded and embroidered hammock behind.  
No man other than her husband may enter her tent.





Weaving black cloth for tents.



197

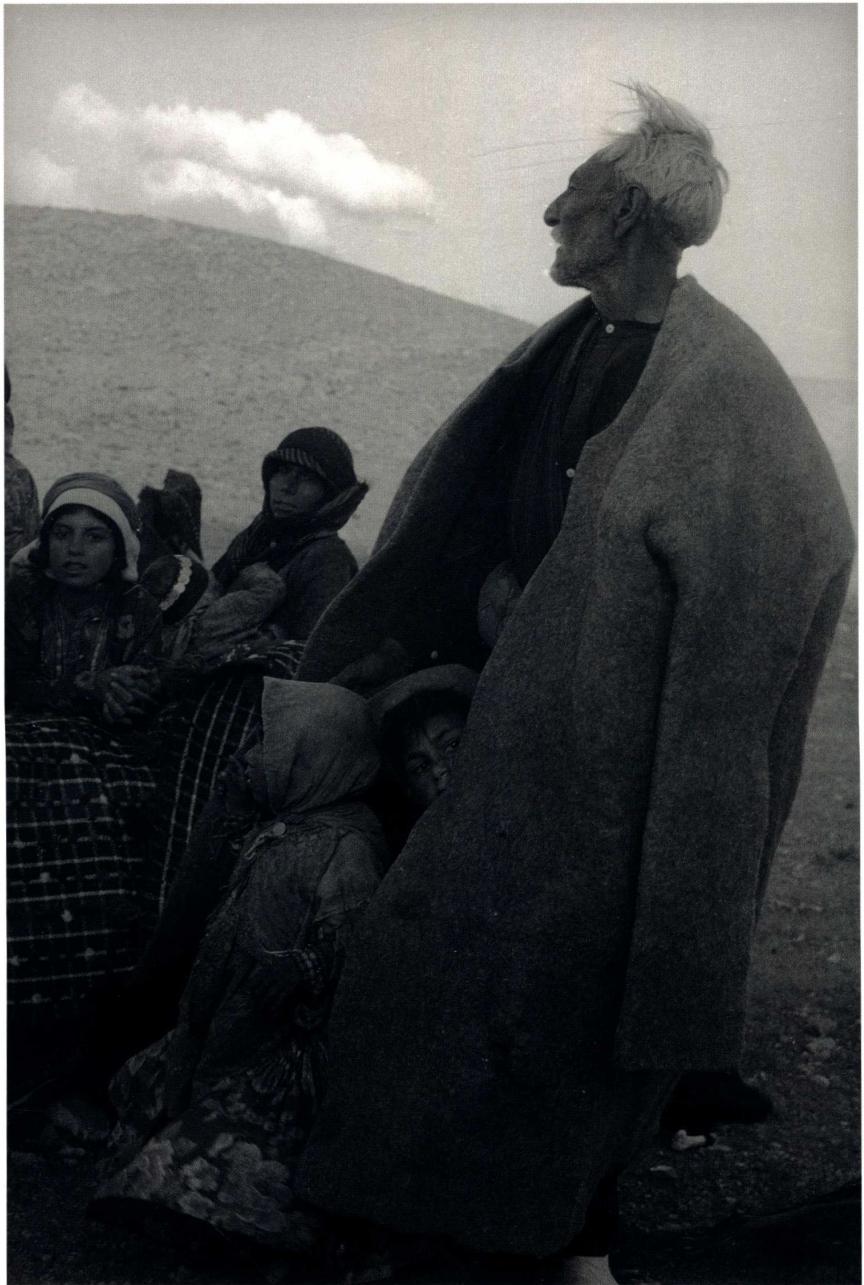
At the riverbank, watching boiling kettles used to dye wool.

**Outside Shiraz**





Qashqa'i nomads.





Qashqa'i nomad woman in the mountains north of Shiraz.





Archaic irrigation system. A bucket is drawn up the well by the horse, which plods along the narrow path until the bucket overturns into a deeply cut channel, thus irrigating the field.

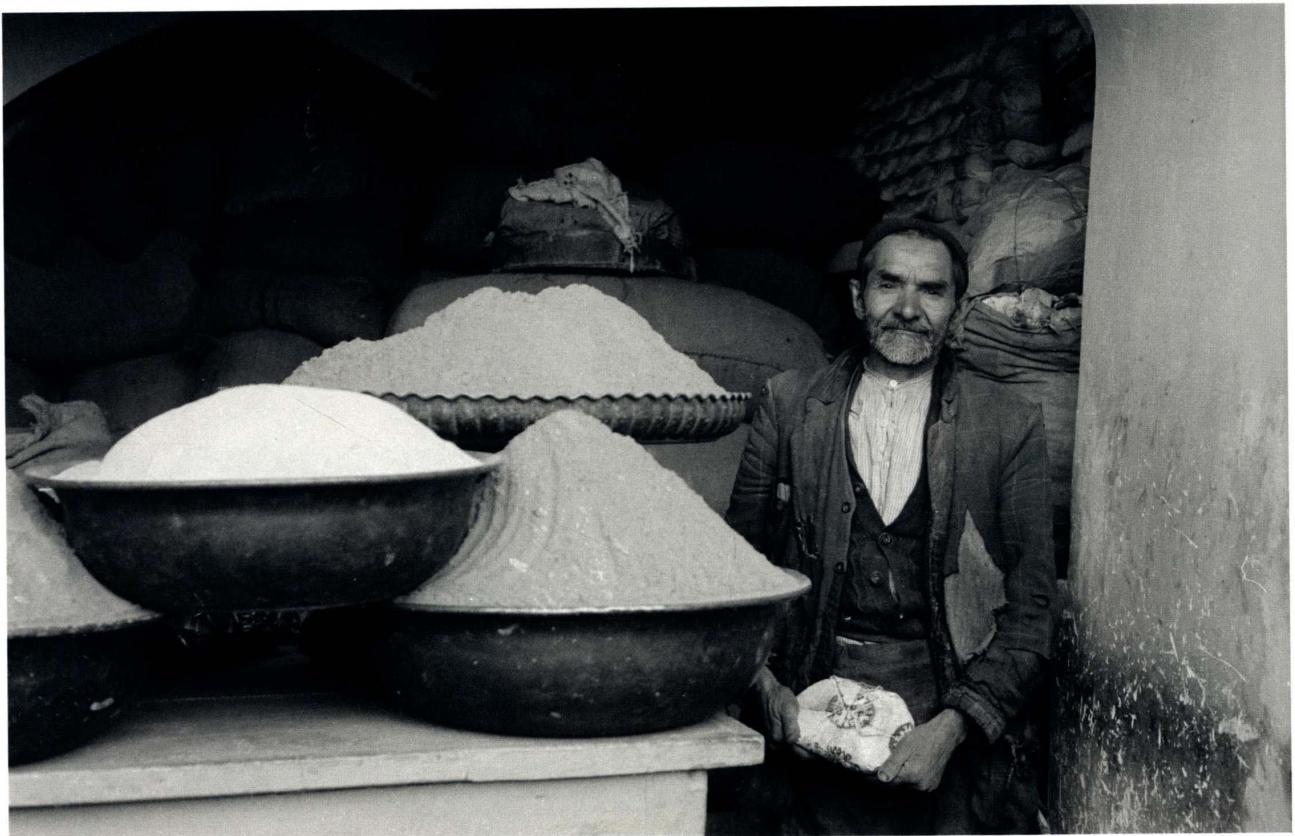


**Shiraz**





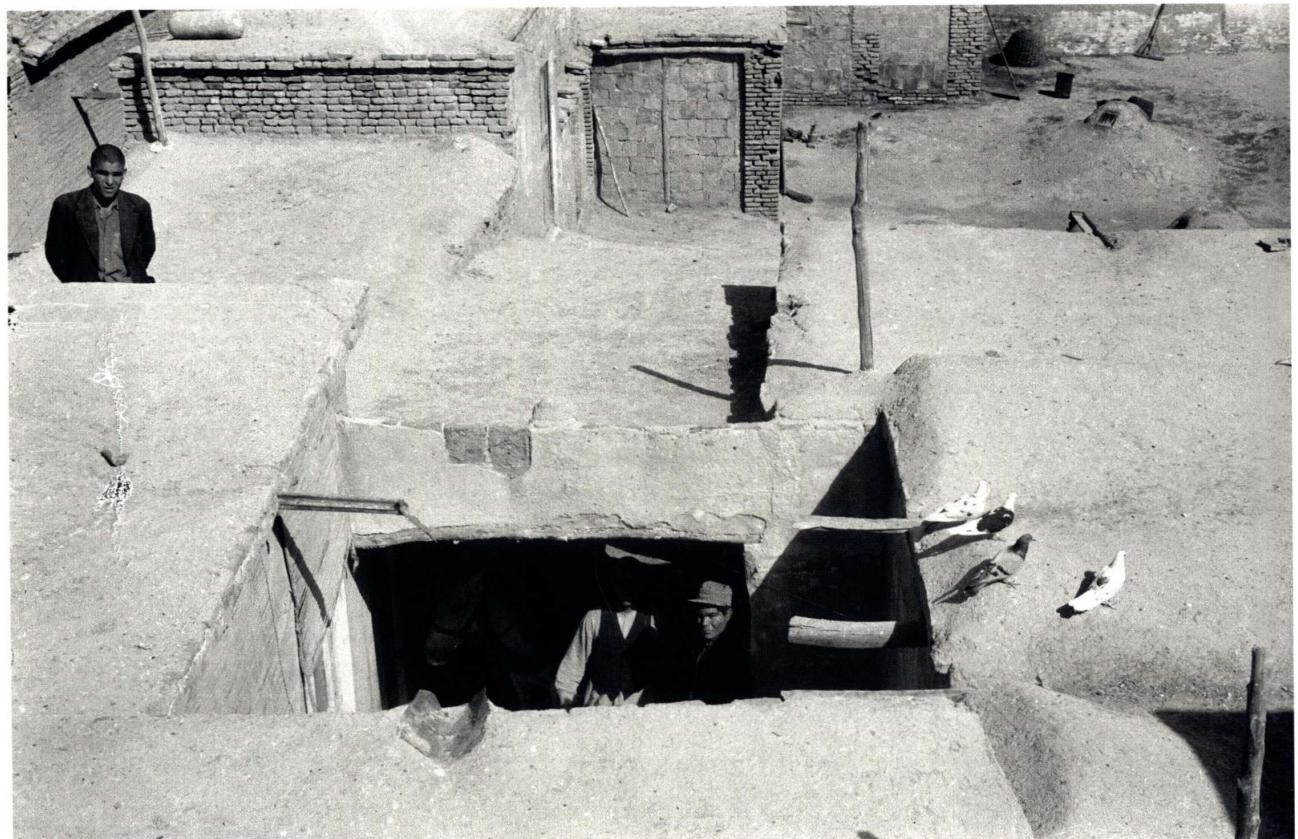
Narrow street and bazaar rooftop.





Ciditel of Karim Khan Zand, now a prison.





Rooftops.

**Abadan**



The Abadan Lawn Tennis Club.





Foreigners and Iranians splash in the pool of the Abadan Swimming Club.





Abadan Boat Club. Two conceptions of pub-crawl: downstairs, foreign workers gather round an English style bar.





Outside Abadan. The salt marshes contrast sharply with the technical achievement of the refinery.





Research laboratory, Abadan Refinery.



223

English and Iranian technicians during nightshift in the control room of the Catalytic Cracker, which breaks crude oil into its various by-products.



View from the top of the Catalytic Cracker.





In the main workshop, foreign technicians train and supervise Iranian workers.



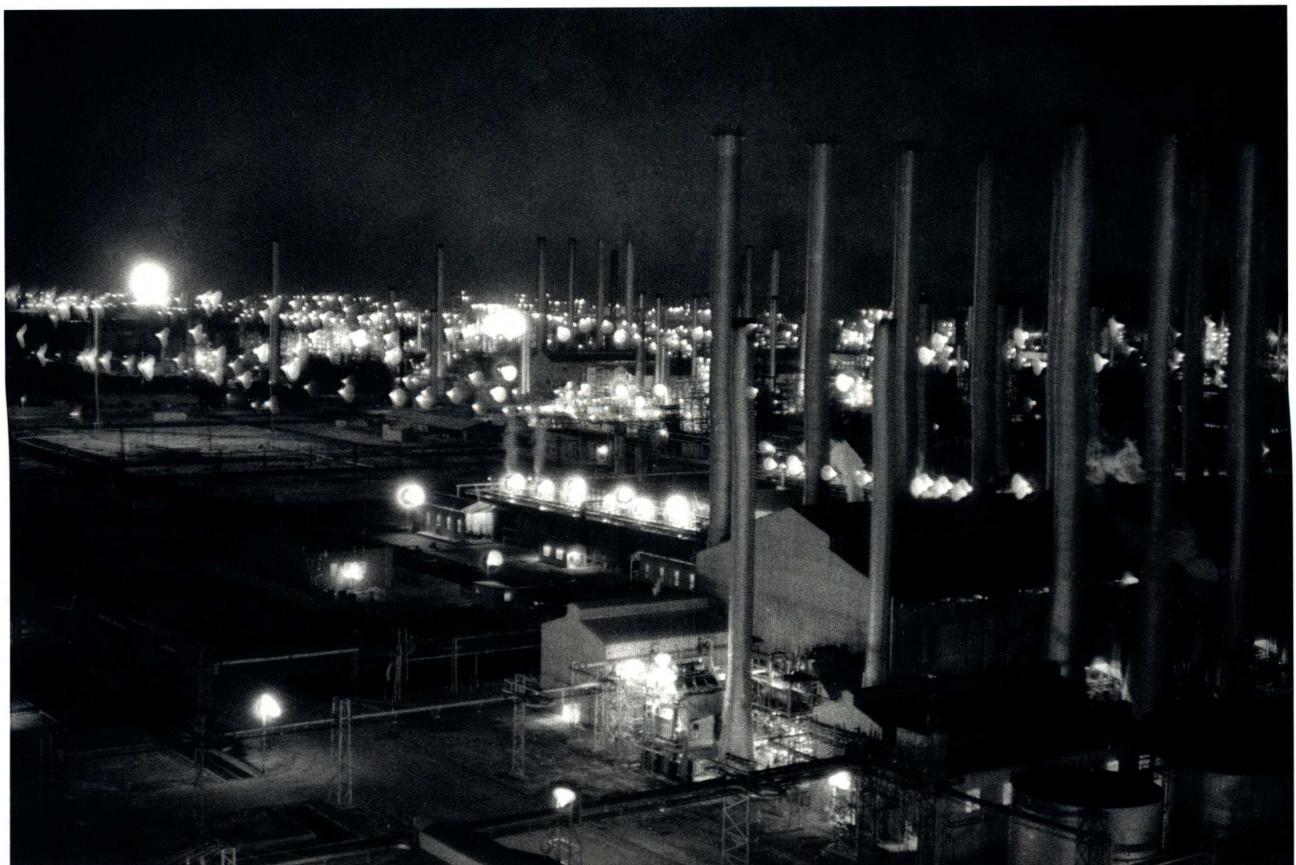


Abadan Refinery.

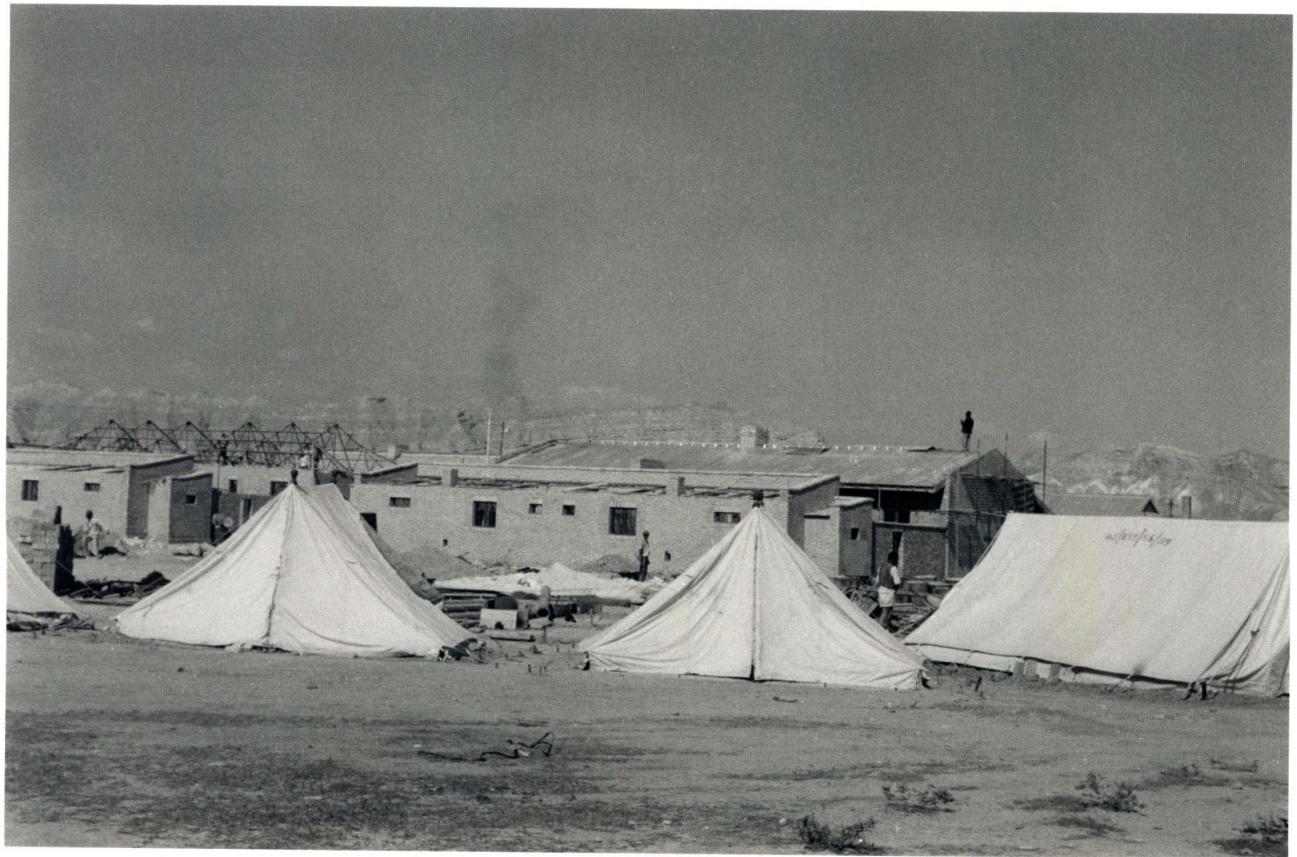


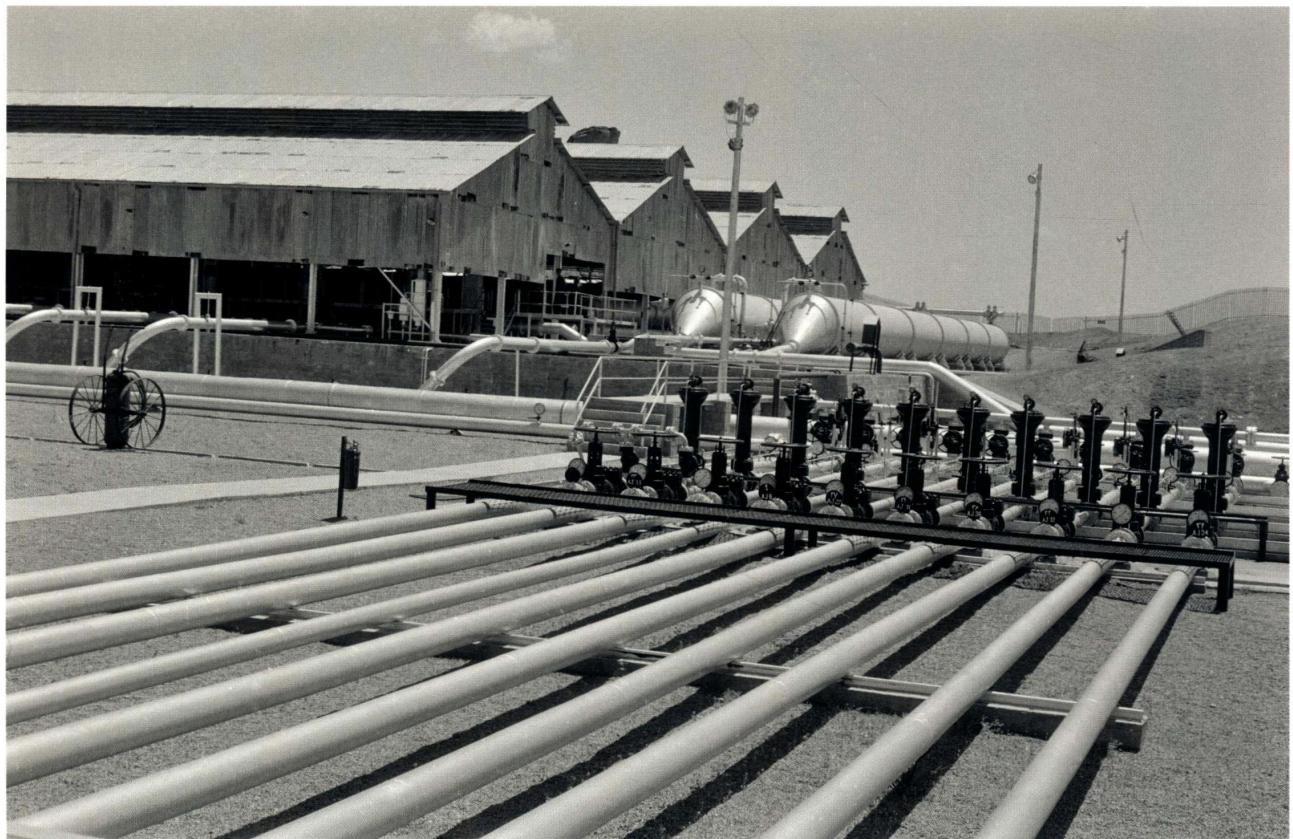


Night, Abadan Refinery.



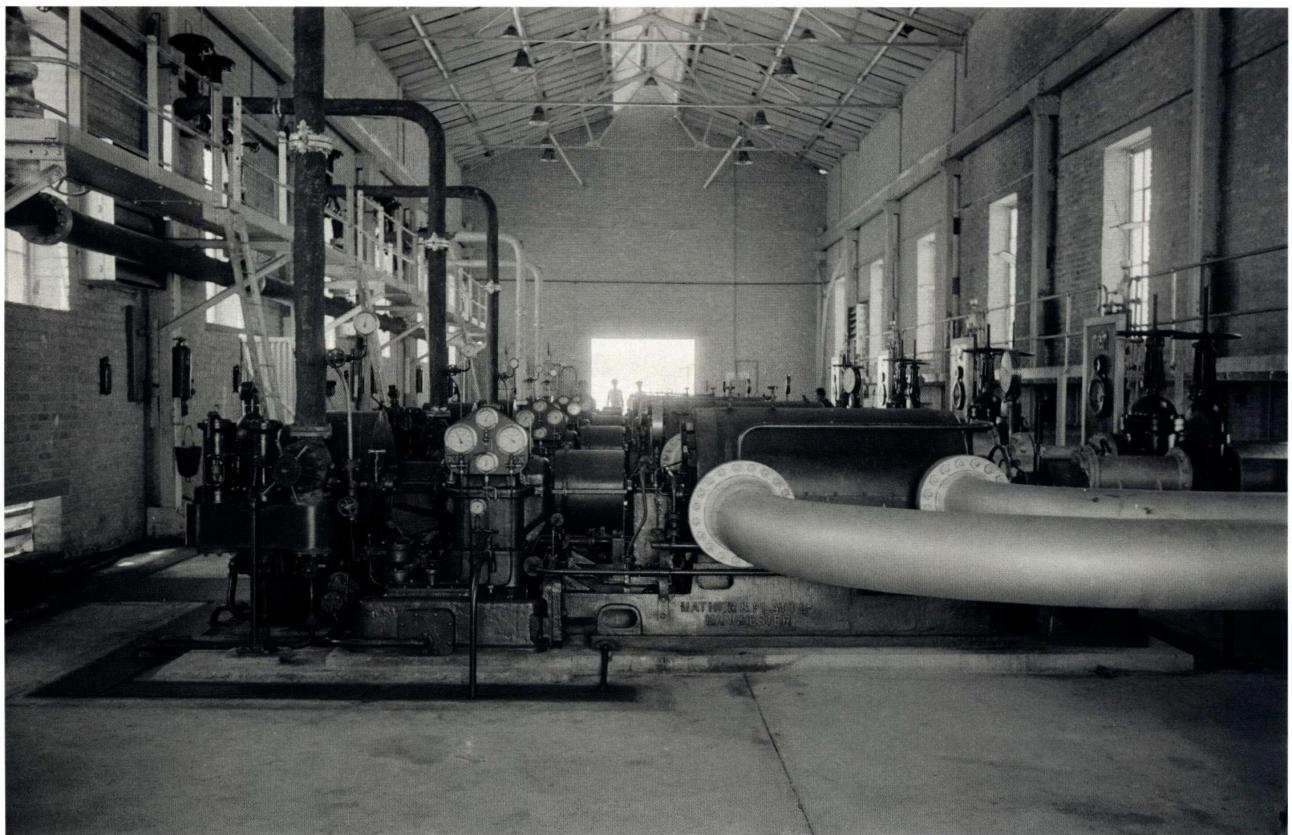
Aga Jari



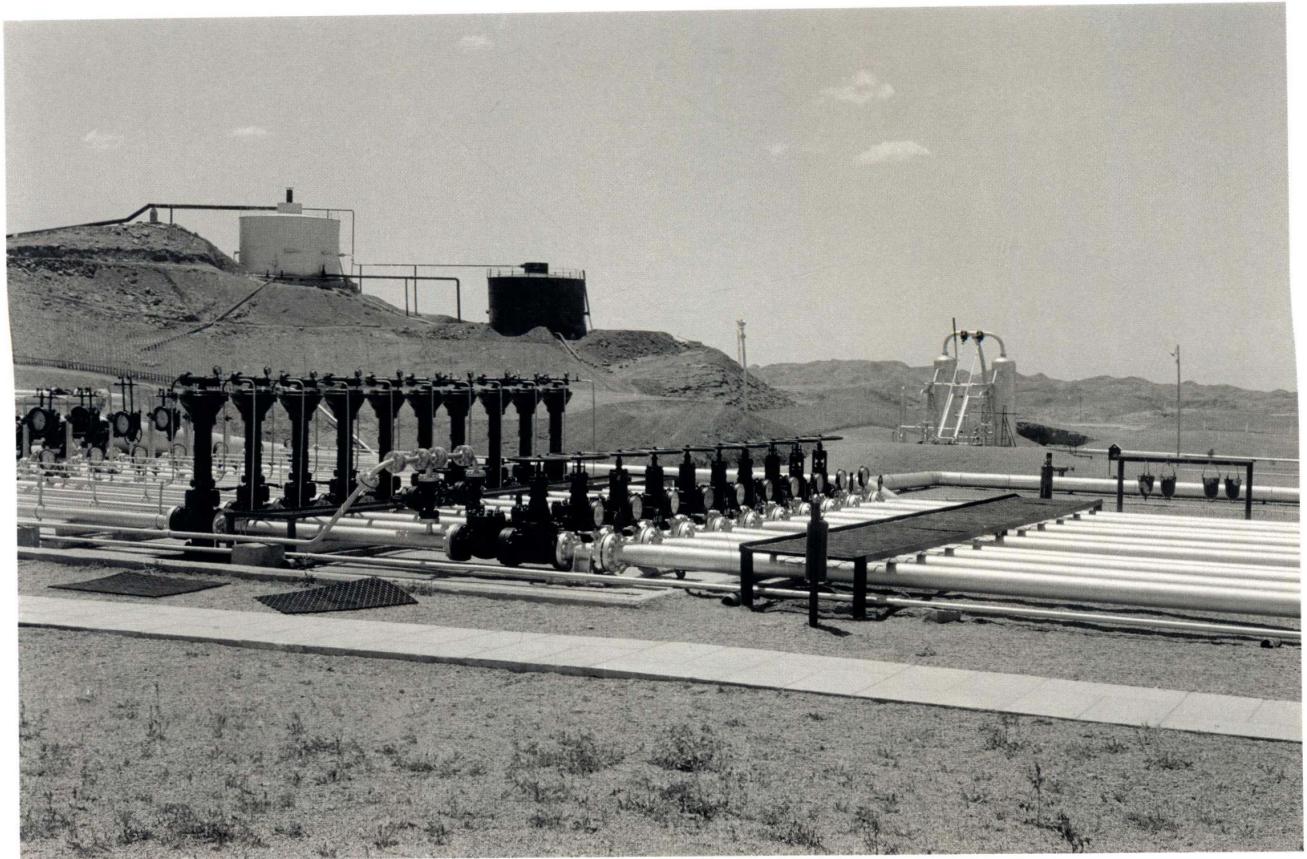


Aga Jari.





Production unit number 2.





Oil drilling equipment.

**Texts**



## IRAN, 1956 Inge Morath

I wanted to photograph the Silk Road, to follow Marco Polo's traces to China. I thought it would be a good idea to start in Iran. So, I told *Holiday Magazine* that I would like to photograph Iran; that was in 1956. I was also very interested in the region, in old civilizations which are suddenly overbalanced by modern times. Iran was a country where they had started to build factories, but a lot was still medieval.

Robert Delpire came with me to Iran because he wanted to make a book. Later he left, and I finished the project on my own. It was crazy, because at that time it was very complicated for women to travel alone in the Middle East. I was always very considerate of how people live. In Iran, I wore the chador and long trousers with a gown, and paid attention to customs. If you don't respect what people do, you should not photograph them.

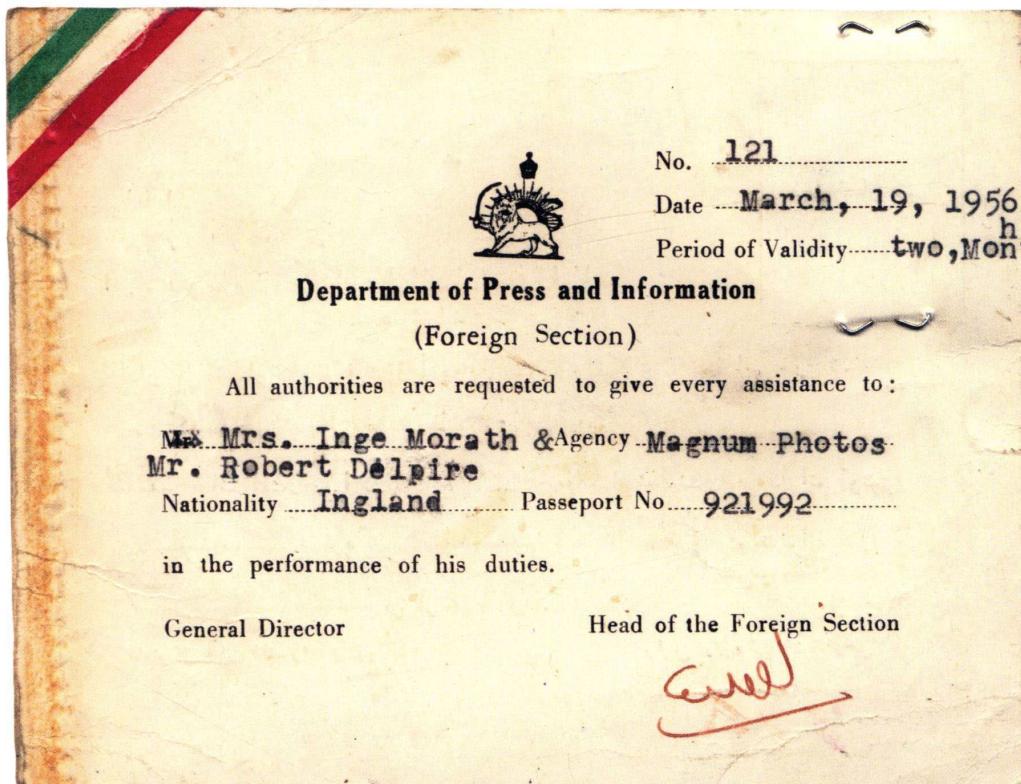
I traveled to Abadan. Delpire accompanied me there, and then I drove back alone with my Armenian driver. But sometimes even he was afraid. If nomads came, he stayed at a great distance and I went walking towards them, armed with aspirin and sugar. At that time I also realized the advantage of a Polaroid and I gave them a picture. The nomads occasionally shot at people, killed them, but I always got along very well with them. It was amazing, but it was also fierce.

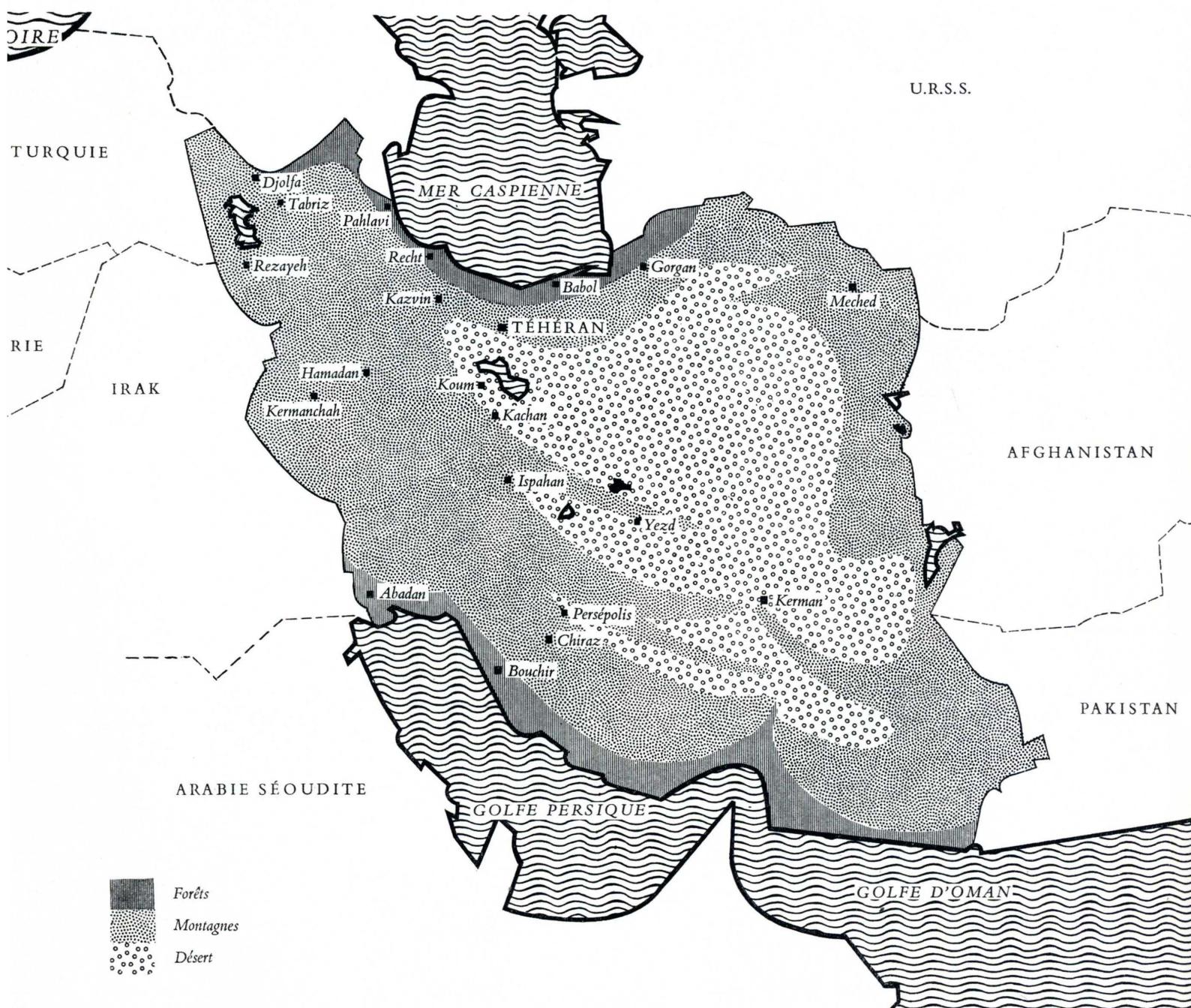
Finally, I traveled to Iraq. It was summer and there was a big heat. It was the wrong time for Iraq. Then I went to Syria and Jordan. At that time there were very few hotels. Occasionally, I slept in ruins, which was great but also a little dangerous. But I think I trusted in God. I came finally back. I was one of the few at that time who were able to travel any place I wanted.

*Interview with Inge Morath by Kurt Kaindl, Salzburg, 1992*

240 Nomads with Polaroid photograph (enlargement from contact sheet).

241 Inge Morath's press and travel documents.





### *Agriculture*

Quatre-vingt-cinq pour-cent des Iraniens vivent de l'élevage ou de l'agriculture, sur environ 45 % de leur territoire, les hautes montagnes et les déserts occupant le reste de la superficie.

Les provinces agricoles sont surtout celles de la Caspienne aux vergers renommés de Rezayeh et du Khorassan. On y cultive aussi le riz, le thé, le coton et les agrumes, les oliviers. Les mûriers s'y développent particulièrement bien, et ces régions tirent

d'appréciables revenus de la culture des vers à soie. Le blé, le raisin (exporté séché) et le tabac à fines feuilles sont cultivés dans l'Azerbaïdjan.

Les autres régions de production agricole sont celles des oasis qui, lorsqu'elles sont convenablement exploitées, produisent des abricots, des amandes, des pêches, des cerises, des pommes et des poires. Un peu partout sur les plateaux et les hautes vallées pousse la vigne dont certains crus sont célèbres (Chiraz, Kazvin, Zagros).

Mais la culture de base est celle du blé (2 700 000 tonnes). Les céréales produites suffisent à la consommation.

L'Iran vend son coton (qui est son deuxième produit d'exportation). Le thé et le sucre ne sont pas cultivés en quantité suffisante pour la consommation nationale: il faut importer les deux tiers de la consommation de sucre et plus de la moitié de celle de thé, qui est pourtant la boisson nationale.

Il ne faut pas oublier la production des dattes tout le long du golfe Persique, récoltées sur une dizaine de millions de palmiers-dattiers.

Enfin, bien moins rentables, mais représentative de leur pays d'origine, sont la culture du tabac spécial pour le narghileh, «tombac», du pavot, auquel sont consacrés 30 000 hectares et dont l'opium est exporté en partie pour les besoins médicaux, des bois précieux de l'Elbourz, dont le fameux «tabrizi», peuplier blanc, la gomme adragante, l'indigo, la garance et le henné.

#### *Elevage*

Pays de nomades épars dans ses immenses steppes, l'Iran reste très pastoral. Les ovins viennent en tête (16 millions de têtes), puis les chèvres et les bœufs et vaches (10 millions environ), les chevaux (2 millions) ne sont pas beaucoup plus nombreux que les ânes (1 200 000). Mais les chameaux (moins de 200 000) ont été concurrencés par les moyens de transports modernes. Les Iraniens musulmans n'élevent pas de porcs. Une trentaine de mille de ces animaux sont élevés par des fermiers arméniens.

#### *Forêts*

Elles s'étendent sur 18 millions d'hectares surtout dans les hautes vallées du Korestan et du Lorestan et sur les pentes de l'Elbourz. Mais les noyers, les chênes, les peupliers blancs, les pins, les érables, les platanes ont été si sérieusement mis en coupe que certaines

régions, autrefois en futaie, ne sont plus couvertes que d'un maigre maquis comme dans le Fars.

#### *Pêche*

Deux centres de pêcheries très différents:

- sur la Caspienne, 7000 à 10 000 tonnes de poissons sont pêchées annuellement, surtout des esturgeons dont on tire 30 tonnes de caviar environ;
- sans le golfe Persique, trop éloigné des centres de consommation, il s'agit surtout d'une industrie de conserves (à Bandar Abbas) qui produit annuellement 120 tonnes de thons et sardines.

#### *Industrie*

Elle est née aux environs de 1930 et s'est fixée surtout dans les textiles et l'alimentation.

Ispahan vient en tête pour l'industrie cotonnière (17 500 broches), puis Chiraz et Chahri. Mais avec 22 millions de mètres de coton par an, l'Iran ne couvre qu'un cinquième des besoins nationaux.

L'industrie de la laine est moins importante (2 millions de mètres seulement).

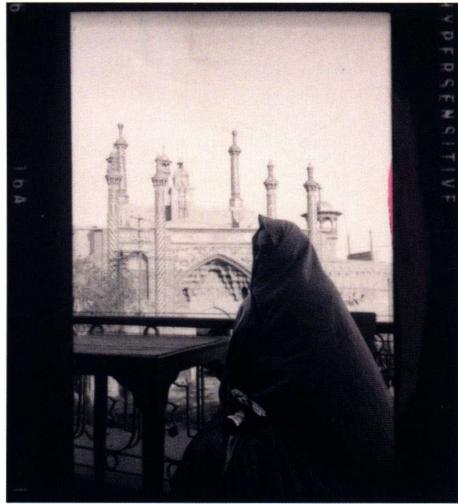
Seize minoteries et 7 sucreries, des usines de tabac, de thé et des distilleries, des verreries à caractère encore artisanal sont de moindre importance. Des cimenteries se développent.

Au milieu de 1955, l'importation d'équipement industriel a été exempté de droits de douane. Le rapprochement des investissements étrangers pour l'industrie a été garanti par une loi d'avril 1956.

#### *Deuxième plan septennal*

Le second plan septennal de 1956 prévoit un investissement de 930 millions de dollars dont 175 millions pour l'industrie (en première place l'industrie minière – puis les manufactures de coton, sucre, oléagineux, boîtiers de montres, etc.).

Le plan a mis en chantier sur le Karadj, près de Téhéran, un barrage de 63 millions de dollars qui conservera 200 millions de mètres cubes d'eau pour la consommation et l'irrigation et fournira 100 000 kilowatts. Un autre barrage – de 38 millions de dollars – est en construction sur le Sapurud. Il irriguera 120 000 hectares et fournira 80 000 kilowatts. D'autres, moins importants, seront édifiés sur le Duruzdan, le Saveh et le Lar. Le projet du Karoun permettra l'irrigation et l'électrification de 1 million d'hectares au Khuzistan.



## THE MYSTERY IN HER OWN EYES: Extracts from a Conversation with Azar Nafisi

*As an Iranian-born writer on literature who is also deeply interested in the role of women within civic society, I invited Azar Nafisi to comment on Inge Morath's photographs of Iran from a variety of perspectives; historical as well as political, personal as well as cultural. As an author and social critic, Nafisi shares with Morath a common set of intellectual concerns. Both are motivated by the larger historical movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and both approach the study of the cultures that have been transformed by such movements through their creative output, particularly their literature and poetry. In approaching Morath's photographs, I asked Nafisi to consider, on the one hand, how Morath might have prepared for her visit to Iran, and what impact a consciousness largely shaped by its literature might have on the photographs she made there. On the other hand, I asked her to imagine a contemporary, non-Iranian viewer of Morath's images, whose knowledge of Nafisi's homeland has been shaped in large part through the media coverage, much of it photographic, of recent political events. Balancing these, during our conversation, in Washington, D.C. on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Nafisi provided both an objective context for encountering Morath's photographs and a sincerely personal response to them.*

John Jacob [hereafter JJ]: Inge Morath came to Iran in 1956. After the war, and following the coup of 1953, the late '50s were a period of relative stability for the country.

Azar Nafisi [hereafter AN]: 1956 was a time of stabilization in Iran. The Second World War, during which Reza Shah, the late Shah's father, was dethroned and his son put into power, in itself created a great deal of destabilization. Then, after the coup in 1953, when the government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq was deposed by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with support from the West, it took a bit of time to heal the wounds and create a new order. From the mid-'50s, we began to have a more stable situation. That is also when the government returned more vigorously to issues of modernization; to paying attention to what Reza Shah's vision for Iran had been.

244 Inge Morath in Q'um (enlargement from contact sheet).

245 Nowruz Reception, Golestan Palace. Queen Soraya (enlargement from contact sheet).



The undercurrents of traditionalism and modernism go side by side in Iran. You see it in the situation of women, for example. To think that at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Shah would have had numerous wives, all of whom would almost never leave the inside of the palace, and when they did they had to be covered from head to toe. Then, in Inge Morath's pictures of Queen Soraya in 1956, we see an utterly modern woman who was half-German. Now, not only would the Shah be monogamous, but he would be marrying a woman who was partly foreign and so comfortably modern. The Iranian society is thus based on a paradox. On one hand, as you see in Morath's pictures, there are women covered from head to toe who are public; you see them in public streets. And then you see the nomads, who are covered in a very different way, a much more colorful and unconventional way. Finally, side by side with these, you see the modern women who look no different from modern western women. We lived with this paradox until the 1979 Revolution, and even now we're living it and fighting because of it.

JJ: What would the situation have been for a Western woman entering into Iran at the time?

AN: During those days there was a constant, ongoing struggle between the religious traditionalists and the modernizers. But, at the particular moment when Inge Morath visited Iran, the modernizers were politically ascendant; it was another moment of triumph for secularization. At the same time, many resisted modernization by refusing to give up the traditional ways of life. For example, for a short period between 1936 and 1941, Reza Shah made unveiling mandatory. But many women, like my own grandmother who lived in Isfahan, refused to leave their homes, until finally he had to repeal that law.

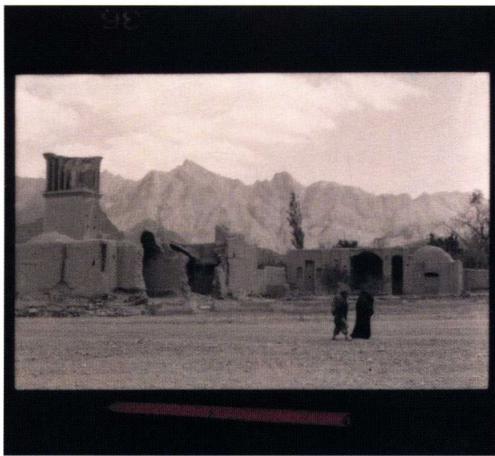
As for Morath herself, what she, as a woman, would not have been able to do two decades before her visit to Iran, she could now be free to do. It was now possible for a single Western woman to travel around the country. The government would not make trouble for her on that score, but I think that she might have had problems traveling in Iran, because most people were not accustomed to seeing a woman looking the way she did, or to seeing an active woman.

JJ: Morath herself wore the chador while in Iran, in respect for the custom.

AN: Whether she wears the chador or not, everybody knows what's behind it. The interesting thing for me is that, despite that, all sorts of people, most of them very traditional, were open to her taking their photographs, and they appear to be quite unselfconscious in those photographs. It is obvious that she is recording a pose, but her subjects are not posing. This is what a good photographer does: she makes the subject unaware of her presence. I think that, in a strange culture, is quite an achievement.

JJ: It's typical of Morath's work as a photographer that she was unobtrusive; her subjects are aware of her presence but not responding to it. Her knowledge of history and her practice of immersing herself in a culture's art and literature before embarking on a journey gave her a unique point of entry into people's lives.

Can you describe Iran's intellectual culture after the war and at the time of Morath's visit?



AN: I keep remembering my own childhood, and how everything that came from "there," from the foreign places, became so quickly part of our lives. But at the same time, it was such a feast. So Pepsi, and then later Coke, and department stores; these all came around the late '50s. I was a very small child when the first department store came to Tehran. There were escalators, and in the restaurant they were serving sausages and eggs. And the joy of going there! In my book, I mention that my mother would take me to a toy store that was called "Iran," but the emblem of the store was a picture of Father Christmas. As I was growing up, these two things were one in my mind.

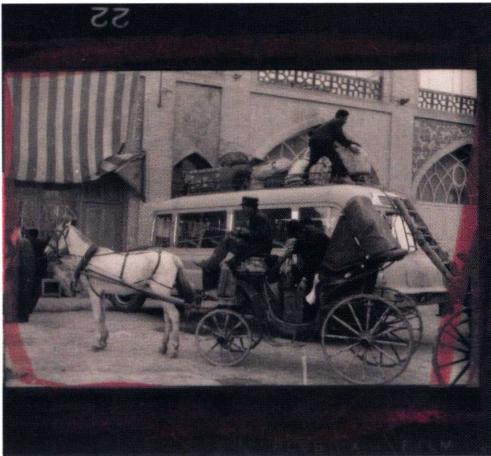
Another thing that was very much part of my life was movie houses. My father, when I was a kid, would take me to see Jerry Lewis, Norman Wisdom, Alberto Sordi. Later, Fellini and Bergman and Antonioni were our mantras. All of these were, at least in modern families, names that we talked about all the time. But films were really one of the things that many modern and non-modern families had in common. And in the '50s, Russian movies were very popular among the young Iranians who were developing a political consciousness. So Iran's elite were as much influenced by the West as by Marxism.

But I firmly believe that the radical changes that happened in Iran have not been just political. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as we speak, the major transformations have been as deeply cultural as they are political. And that is why the targets have always been in culture; women and minorities, and what goes by the name of imagination.

In Iran at the time, there was a continuation of the trend to bring modernism to poetry that began at the turn of the century. But the language of classical Persian poetry has always been very resistant to modernization, so it is in literature where you see real change. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century right through the '40s and '50s, and even on into the '60s, you see an effort to transform literature from a classical – very beautiful, but classical and more formal – language, into a language of the individual rather than the ideal. There was a search for the ordinary; to find the lingo of "real people." Persian classical poetry, apart from a few poets such as Ferdowsi and Gorgani, is dominated by mysticism, and there is a negation of reality at the center of mystical poetry because it denies the actual world. With this new modern trend, the world started to return to literature, dealing with everyday affairs. At the same time, fiction became more earthly and sensual. This was a time of experimentation when, to accommodate the new ideas and themes, the classical rhymes and rhythms were broken. I've been thinking a lot about what Inge Morath might have read before traveling to

246 Ruins outside the village of Taft (enlargement from contact sheet).

247 Street scene, Isfahan (enlargement from contact sheet).



Iran. The person whom we call the father of modern Persian prose was Sadegh Hedayat, who killed himself in Paris in the 1950s. His most famous novel, a classic, is called *The Blind Owl*. It is timeless, like Persian miniatures and Persian poetry. It happens near the ruins of the ancient city of Rey. For the angst-ridden narrator, the present is very bleak and has nothing to offer. But the past is just as bleak; it's a past in ruins. It doesn't come with insights; it doesn't come tenderly. It comes as something cruel, providing no answers, no consolations. Hedayat was much influenced by Nerval, Novalis, and Kafka, and was very popular in France, so we may speculate that Morath was familiar with his writing.

In some of Morath's photographs I felt that there was an affinity between that feeling of being overwhelmed by a past that is so huge and a present that is evasive and inaccessible. There is a sense of pessimism about the present and its intangibility. In her photographs of the village of Taft, for example, you see these small people walking by the ruined buildings; those ruins are testaments to a marvelous past, perhaps, and to a present that has not yet been acquired. It is not yet tangible; there seems to be a fear of what it will have in store for us. Again, in a photograph of Isfahan there is a bus, and in front of it a horse and buggy. I thought it rather symbolic that the horse and buggy is blocking the bus, as if reminding us that "We're here! We are not going to go away and you have to deal with us." But we didn't deal with it. We allowed the different elements of our paradox to have their own parallel worlds, side by side.

Another thing about the literature that flourished during the '40s and '50s – again, I'm referring to Hedayat because he played such a central role – is that modernization happened partly in opposition to Islam. Many of the modernizers searched for a Persian identity that was not Islamic. Hedayat looked to the Zoroastrian past, writing plays and stories that belonged to pre-Islamic, ancient Iran. I was really struck by Morath's work because, in the books of photography by foreigners that I have seen, not much attention has been paid to Zoroastrians. But she focuses on them, and on the idea of these layered pasts, each of them vanquished but not vanished.

JJ: Although no documentation survives to indicate how she came into contact with the Zoroastrians, it's clear from Morath's notes and contact sheets that her encounters with them were of particular importance to her.

AN: And it is interesting because she doesn't just go into the temples. She goes into homes. She is making a point about the culture of these Zoroastrian women. You can see in her pictures that although the Zoroastrian women are



supposed to be dressed in Zoroastrian garb, actually they don't really look much different from those you would call Muslim. Each has been accumulating the culture of the other. In Iran, Islam has taken much of Zoroastrian and pre-Islamic culture into its architecture and poetry. Morath attempts to bring these different layers of time into the same frame; there is Zoroastrian, there is Islamic, and then there is "modern" or secular.

Morath's attention to the nomads is also interesting. Nomads were quite important in Iran. The beginning of their demise was much accelerated during the Pahlavi period because of the centralization of the state. The nomads were against centralization because land became more and more scarce. They had territories and they had guns, but the central government, by and by, destroyed or disarmed them. The Zoroastrians, during the Shah's time, had more freedom. Now the government feels very threatened by them because after the Revolution there was a revival of interest in Zoroastrianism by ordinary people; a lot of people were trying to convert. Officially, because they are people of the book, they are "allowed" to exist and have their temples still. We all celebrate the New Year; the Persian New Year is Zoroastrian, the festivities you see in Morath's photographs of Nowruz belong to that tradition, which the government could not do anything against. So, again, this book shows a past that is in ruins, but it's not going away.

JJ: In fact, the most common response to these photographs has been to the relative absence of any symbols of modernity. I remember that you also were initially struck by the lack of urban scenes, in spite of the fact that many of the photographs were made in cities like Tehran and Isfahan.

AN: The interesting thing about modernity in Morath's photographs is that she doesn't choose Tehran to represent it. Photographs of modern Iran usually refer to the more obvious sites: unveiled women, or the nightclubs and the cars, but Morath does not seek those obvious symbols. It is wrong to say that she doesn't capture modernity though, because the oil industry was what made modernism possible in Iran. Morath pays attention to that; she chooses Abadan. Now, Abadan, obviously, was so much under the influence of the British. It was a place to itself, and insulated in many ways. Morath's pictures of Abadan are interesting because of the way she sees things differently from other foreign photographers. For example, in one picture, showing foreign employees of the refinery at a British style pub, they're so much at home, while in another, of Iranian employees at a picnic, they're much less so. It seems as if the Iranians are the guests.

JJ: Of course, those photographs were never published. Nevertheless, one has the sense of Morath working against the grain of her assignments.

AN: But she's very subversive. Having been told to take pictures of Persian carpets and the blue mosques, she goes on and shows us the little girls working in the carpet factories. In one of those pictures, where three girls are sitting on top and another little one below is looking at the camera, it is amazing because the carpet becomes an extension of the girls. It is a very telling picture. There is another photograph showing the girls' hands that

248 Little girls knotting carpets, Isfahan (enlargement from contact sheet).

249 White bearded grandfather with a girl of his family, Rey (enlargement from contact sheet).



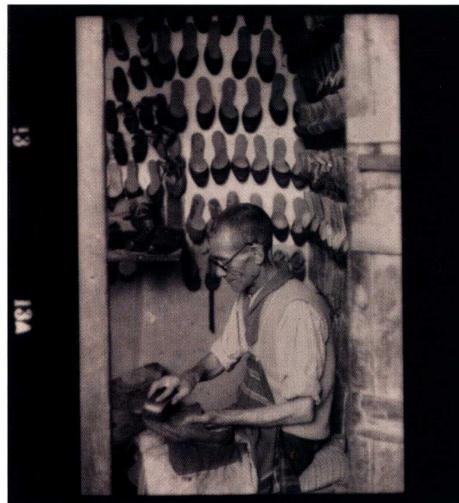
is so surreal, and rather frightening. The caption explains that they're wearing henna to protect their hands but you don't see that; that is not its purpose. The purpose is to shock, to enlighten you as to what goes on behind this beauty: this terrible, terrible labor involving such young children.

Most books of photography on Iran bring out the lush side, the colors, the obvious beauty. There is a lot of beauty in Morath's photographs too, but it is a really understated beauty. It is a beauty that does not want you to find its secrets. There is a defensiveness in showing the country as all lush, as if we're afraid to see anything ugly in it. That defensiveness is not there in Morath's pictures. Although she photographs in black and white, I almost feel that earth color that is so Persian. The same with the dust, or the peelings on the walls. And the buildings, the doors; you know the beautiful old door in her photograph of Rey that is so old that it is almost there no more. It always made me melancholy, even in childhood, whenever there was something so fine and yet dying. There is a sense of melancholy here. In these crumbling buildings and patient people, I sense a certain fierceness, a resistance to life's cruelty. Such silent resistance belongs to a culture that has lived a long, long time and is suspicious of life's promises.

There seems to be, in Iran, an awareness of two things: the past and the transience of life. The idea about the cruelty and transience of life is very much part of a nation that is so ancient and has been, time and time again, vanquished. On one level, instability has become a part of our national character. Iran is very enigmatic, even to someone like myself who was born there. As soon as you give it one definition something completely opposite emerges. For me, the essence of Iran is evasiveness and enigma. You feel this in the way that, in some of Morath's pictures, one element undermines the other.

In the bazaar, for example, which is the most traditional of all places, you see all these objects of modernity hanging from the ceiling, the boots and the umbrellas. Everybody is roaming around and they all seem unaware of the clash. Again, in Isfahan she photographed a little boy mending a shoe, and right by him there is the photograph of a modern man looking completely unrelated to that little boy and that dingy shop. What is the relationship? Will they start talking?

Another thing that intrigued me about Morath was the way she treated her subjects, for example in her picture of a boy with brooms. Objects become extensions of the people in her pictures, or vice versa – sometimes people become



extensions of objects – and there is an affinity between them. And I love her sense of movement, the way the brooms go up and down. She is portraying a very ordinary scene and yet manages to give it a surreal feeling. She brings out something of the essence. These objects all of a sudden become like fairy tale objects. I have a favorite picture of a shoemaker. There are womens' slippers in the background and there is something about his face that I just love. What is it about this man that I find so fairy taleish? I mean, he's just sitting there mending shoes. What is magical is the man's complete focus on his work, one that must be quite mundane and tiresome and yet he is so wholly dedicated to it.

Another example of movement is the dance. During the Nowruz, Morath has photographed young men and girls dancing. And in Persian dance, as in Arabic, there is so much eroticism in the movements. It is obviously asking you to look. It is amazing, the curve of the body. There is so much beckoning; with the eyes, the eyebrows, the hands. Every part of the body is curving in different directions, and every part is shamelessly asking you to look.

JJ: You've spoken about aspects of Morath's photographs that are familiar or true to your experience of Iran. There must be others that reveal her as an outsider trying to penetrate the culture?

AN: One thing that surprised me was her photographs of the Caspian. It is the most magical place in my mind. As a child, we spent most of our vacations in the places she photographed, in Rasht, Pahlavi, and in Chalus. The Caspian is so lush, but she goes and photographs it in winter, which can be bleak. At first I couldn't recognize it, although we had been in Chalus when it was snowing. For me, it was a strange defamiliarization process, looking at the stranger within something very familiar. I felt a deep resonance, and yet I had to adjust my eyes. Somehow the green was so strong in my memory that I didn't think it could be this barren. That is what she seems to see in Iran: a certain barrenness.

And her mountains are different from other photographs of mountains in Iran. Most of those pictures present the mountains as majestic, and many focus on Damavand, the highest peak and a strong symbol of Iranian nationalism. But Morath photographed the mountains of southern Tehran, which are lower. When you have a landscape that is barren, when you have a mountain that is lost in the mist, when you have a Caspian scene shrouded by fog, all of this creates a sense of absence that is as articulate as what is present and visible. It creates an air of mystery. There is a sense of mystery to her photos, as if not just the presences, but also the absences are speaking.

250 (left) Shoe shop, Isfahan (enlargement from contact sheet).

250 (right) Shoe maker with womens' slippers, Yazd (enlargement from contact sheet).

251 Chibouk smoker, Tehran (enlargement from contact sheet).



Maybe that's how she saw. It could be, and this is pure speculation, that for her this place was itself a puzzle. She was photographing the mystery in her own eyes. Most people who go to Iran fall in love with it because people seem so welcoming. There is a welcome, but that doesn't mean that people are opening to you. It means that they are treating you as a dear guest. So I thought, maybe that is how she feels, like a guest who's trying to peek in. There is a shroud over many of the photographs, as if to say that what is there is not being wholly revealed. And if we cannot reveal everything, let's have the idea that this place is defined as much by what it doesn't reveal as by what it does.

Another thing that interested me is the way that some of Morath's characters avoid looking at one another. For example, her photograph of the chibouk smoker in Tehran. There is a close proximity between the two men in the picture, and it's obvious that they must know one another, but they are not interacting; I seldom see her characters interacting. Again in Rey, in her picture of the grandfather and young woman by the old gate. They're not looking at one another; they're not communicating. As in her photograph of the bus and the horse and buggy, they are parallel. It is very amazing, people living side by side and each in a world that is closed to the other; they're strangers.

In her photographs of Nowruz though, people are very much communal, very much together. Nowruz is an ancient celebration. It is something that Iranians can genuinely say they share no matter what religion or ethnicity they come from. This is one of the few places where she shows people letting go. Another is the Zoroastrian ceremony in Chum, where the bodies are in very close proximity to one another. And these are all the more exciting because she captures a special quality of light.

I remember my Tehran and Isfahan, where there is a special quality of light. If I wanted to catch the essence of what Iran is to me, it is droplets of light, the shadows that light constantly plays. In Iran there is a sudden light, and that sudden light against the darkness is so startling, so surreal. You have it in all different places. Sometimes the light reveals and sometimes the light actually covers. Morath doesn't always use the light to reveal. She also uses it to reveal the mystery. And the effects of the sun are what you see also in her pictures of the Nowruz celebrations. That discovery by her is what makes the difference between getting the spirit of a place and just showing a place. I have not yet found the language in words to describe what light did with our lives, how it changed us, but in photography you can do that. So if we want to be thankful to Morath for doing something about Iran, it should be for revealing something that is the essence of the

country, which is light. This light can be overwhelming, and it can be joyous. It can be hiding. It can be mute and go against its own nature. All through her photographs you have these different statements about light.

JJ: I'm interested in what you said about Morath photographing the mystery in her own eyes. Looking at her photographs of Iran chronologically, the first place she went to after Tehran was the village of Vanack. The photographs that she took there rely heavily on convention, suggesting that she wasn't yet sure of herself in this encounter with the unknown. But as she moved forward, her photographs become quite unconventional. The reason is not that Iran became less mysterious to her, but rather that she allowed that mystery to become a part of the story she was telling. For me, this goes back to the question of literature. Morath is more a narrative than a purely documentary photographer, and her narrative is in some part a story about herself.

AN: I have always thought of literature as a way of communicating, of connecting with the world. You connect to your topic and you connect to the unknown reader. But it was the subversive role, that no matter what you're talking about you're subverting it at the same time, that I loved; the idea that when you write you destabilize yourself. I feel that Morath destabilizes herself by subverting the usual way of looking at Iran.

Another thing I appreciate, and I think it's also subversive, is that although she has traditional photographs of, for example, women in black chadors, she doesn't exoticize them. Which is what so many, including some Iranians, do. Her photographs are not sentimental, and sometimes they can be harsh towards the subject. I mean, first of all, literature or art is always about truth, and truth has never been comforting. We reveal the harsh side of ourselves through our art, and tenderness only comes when you're able to do that. Morath finds a way of bringing out the harshness, but also treating it tenderly. Giving it respect; that is the most important point. That is the difference between this selection and the earlier [1958] publication of these photographs in which the essayist is telling us, "This is how Iranians are." He uses the language of authority, but with Morath there is just her own narrative: "I was there."

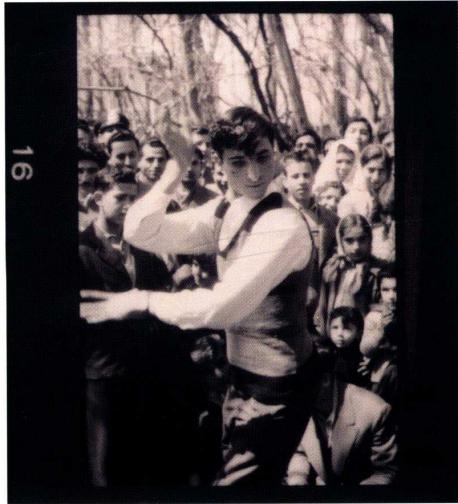
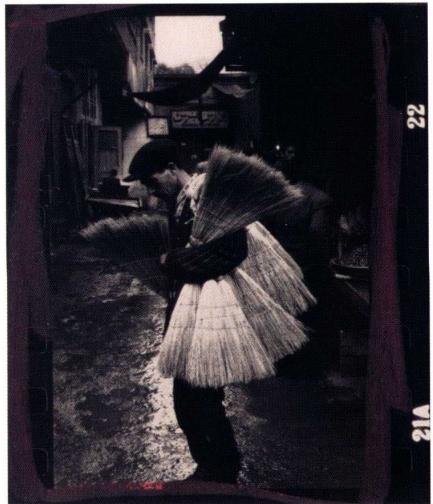
In Iran's classical literature there is an obliqueness, an oblique way of expressing things. It is so metaphoric, everything is so much by implication, and reality is presented as an expression of another world, a different sphere. I don't know how familiar Morath was with Iranian literature, but in some of her pictures you can see that obliqueness, that muteness which also speaks. That is a very important point because the things that endure in art are the everyday things of life. There is, behind her body of work, a celebration of life, a celebration of a boy who sells brooms. That is why her objects have movements, because those objects are a statement about a life, no matter how harsh or seemingly trivial that life is. For me, the most important thing is the extraordinariness of the ordinary. That is why the writers I love are the ones who are genuinely realistic, who celebrate just us being who we are. Morath does that. The people she photographs are just people, but they are so much entwined with what they do, whether they're nomads or shoe makers or bazaaris in their place of work. These are the things that will endure no matter how transient life is.

What she does with objects reminds me, in a very strange way, of Rumi, who was such a playful poet. He brought very ordinary objects into mystical poetry. He talks about brooms and sugar, and then he makes the brooms do magical things. In one poem, which I am paraphrasing, he says, "My beloved gave me a broom and asked me to clean the dust off the ocean." All of a sudden the broom, dust, and ocean are displaced and separated from their original functions, gaining a magical dimension. In the best of Morath's pictures you find a similar quality.

JJ: I wonder if it's possible for a contemporary audience, particularly one of non-Iranian viewers, to see that quality? Monika Faber, in her article for this book, asks whether it is possible to view these photographs at all, except through the prism of Iran's more recent political history?

252 (left) Street scene, Tehran (enlargement from contact sheet).

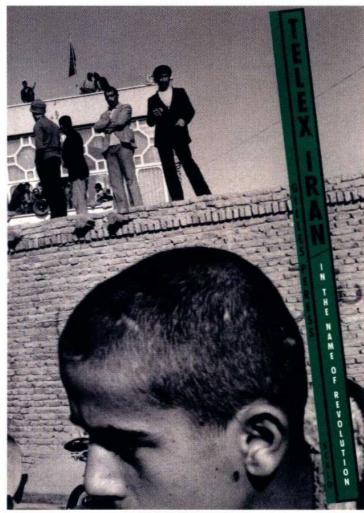
253 (right) 13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year, outside Tehran. Dancer (enlargement from contact sheet).



AN: Of course, the interesting thing is how what we know will affect the way that we see. For example, about many of Morath's pictures I could say, "This is not the Iran that I know." Many of these places have vanished. But what is more interesting than that is what these pictures, taken fifty some years ago, tell us about the present. That is the test for pictures; everything dates, but how do they date? When I read our epic poet Ferdowsi, what I am amazed by is not just what he reveals about our past, but also how, in a very strange way, he predicts our future. What gives these pictures value is not the fact that we see something that still exists, but that they still reveal something significant, something essential that goes beyond the boundaries of time. I think that if a work of art is not particular then it cannot be universal. Universality comes out of going deeply into the moment. You need to have that particularity of the moment, and then you move beyond it. The moments she has recorded are enduring not just because they're showing the 1950s, but because there is a trace of 1950s in the present. That is the magic of it. That is the magic not of Inge, but of her art.

Anything that stays, that makes you, fifty years later, want to publish it, should go beyond just the artist's views. That is why we read Aeschylus. I want to look at Morath's pictures because I read Aeschylus. She really experienced the deepest of all cruelties during her lifetime. People who have experienced what she did understand that everything goes beyond politics. But I think that the point should be made that this book comes out not because of the Islamic Republic, not because of WMDs, not because Bush and Obama are talking about Iran, but because we need to connect as human beings.

I guess the duty of art, if there is a duty, is to restore our humanity. If you're an artist and you look at the world through a political lens, you in fact miss the politics. I mean that politics itself needs a space, but by reducing everything to it everything is lost. That is why people are not really political right now; they're politicized. They're not thinking about politics the way Plato talked about it. Iran, especially, has been so categorized and politicized. Of course, people will look at these photographs and they will see the women with the chador and say, "There you are, they've always been like this." But I'm hoping that those people will also look at the Nowruz dancers and say, "But who are they? Will the real Iranians stand up?"



## PERPLEXITY AND PERPETUITY: INGE MORATH IN IRAN    Monika Faber

*Abroad, that is not a country. You have to first be there in order to create a country of it.<sup>1</sup>*

Nicolas Bouvier, travel photographer in Iran, 1953-54

### From Iran to Persia?

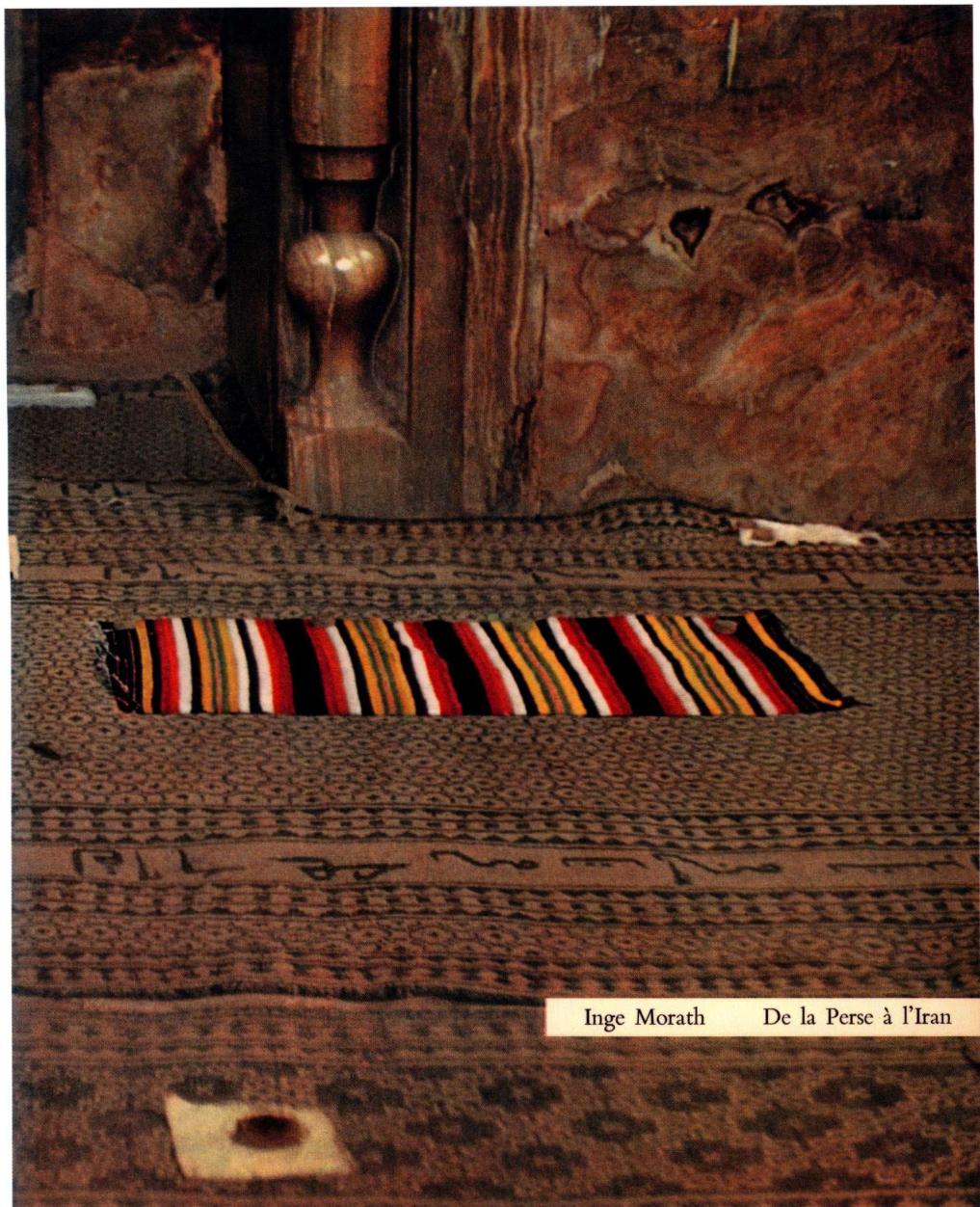
More than twenty years after Inge Morath visited Iran, in 1956, her colleague from Magnum Photos, Gilles Peress, traveled there to document a dramatic moment in history. Ousted during the Islamic Revolution, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi left Iran in January 1979, and in November militant students took 66 hostages in the US Embassy. Peress spent five weeks in Tehran, from December 1979 to January 1980. His insights into the tense situation, appearing as a photo report for the *New York Times*, permanently shaped the West's view of Iran. It was not, however, Peress' observations of the disparate aspects of life during the Revolution, as seen in his book *Telex Iran*,<sup>2</sup> that lingered in public consciousness. Rather, the public was absorbed by those particular images whose underlying tone of aggression seemed to embody a feeling that prevailed outside Iran, that the political upheaval comprised a threat.

Fueled by a broad range of factors, a menacing impression of Iran has persisted until today, forming the foundation for nearly everything said about the country. How is it possible to experience the complexity of the images taken by Morath during her trip – also spanning five weeks, in March and April 1956, but conveying a completely different rhythm and impression – without being conscious of the developments that followed later in time, in terms of both political change and photographic approach?

Compared to conditions in 1980, Iran in 1956 could, at least from a Western perspective, be considered a peaceful country in which tradition and modernity collided with one another at all levels of society, yet resulted in relatively few

254 Cover, Gilles Peress' *Telex Iran*, 1984. Courtesy Gilles Peress/Magnum Photos.

255 Cover, Inge Morath's *De la Perse à l'Iran*, 1956. Courtesy Robert Delpire.



Inge Morath

De la Perse à l'Iran

open conflicts. The Shah had regained power in 1953, with help from Great Britain and the United States, and was forging ahead with his modernization program. Compared with the political character of Peress' vision, Morath's pictures of Iran might be described as more "coincidental," as if stemming from a fascination for things foreign, and thus less focused on creating an overarching sense of atmosphere through personal point-of-view. At first glance, veiled women form the only appearance of continuity between these two sets of images; otherwise they seem to speak of different worlds, and to represent very different visual perceptions.

The book *De la Perse à l'Iran*, published in Paris in 1958 with a text by Eduard Sablier and a selection of photographs taken two years earlier by Morath, has a cover picture that itself presents a specific atmosphere: the pattern of prayer rugs, floor, and marble wall form a highly refined – through their very lack of adornment – ensemble of tranquility, meditation, and perpetuity. Compared with the photographs now being published by her estate, the prevailing atmosphere of that earlier volume is decidedly conventional. In it, images of nomads, street hawkers, bazaar scenes, craftsmen with tools that seem to stem from medieval times – photographed in black and white – contrast sharply with the bright, colorful scenes of carpet washing, mosaics in mosques, and women clad in variegated traditional costumes. Only the last chapter shows contemporary scenery, namely the refineries in Abadan and the oil fields of the Shatt al-Arab.

The difference between the Iran which Morath photographed and that which visitors see today is total (admittedly, this trivial statement might be said of any place in the world). Morath's photographs can, therefore, initially be read simply as historical documents: by the inquisitive traveler who wishes to cast an eye over a lost everyday world, perhaps, or the ethnographer who wishes to study Zoroastrian practices. But such considerations do not reveal Morath's intentions in Iran. What matters is the way that she tackled her task; what interested her, and how she photographed it.

Morath has written several texts that offer insight into her work, and has herself commented on how different photographic viewpoints are superimposed upon one another over the years. This phenomenon poses a significant problem for photography: "Thirty years ago the burden of the already photographed was considerably less than now,"<sup>3</sup> she wrote, suggesting it was easier to approach photojournalism in the 1950s, at least psychologically, than it has been for later generations.

### **The Assignment**

Inge Morath was commissioned by the American magazine *Holiday* to take photographs in the Middle East. She arrived in Tehran on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956, and spent her first week there, primarily to obtain the requisite documents and photography permits. Her protective escort was, in her own words, "a police captain who could manage a few words of broken French."<sup>4</sup> Morath's onward journey, by plane and car, led first to the Caspian Sea; there she photographed a few locations in the Elburz Mountains, where snow still lay on the ground. She then headed for Isfahan – "Miserable hotel, everything else is great. Work difficult, but inspiring,"<sup>5</sup> – moving on to Yazd and, finally, to Shiraz via Persepolis. From there she flew to Abadan, in the Persian Gulf, to photograph the oil refinery and oil fields. Upon returning, her driver was waiting in Shiraz to take her back to Tehran "on incredibly bumpy roads via Kashan, a different route than on the outward leg,"<sup>6</sup> through Isfahan, where she spent a few more days, and Persepolis, which she photographed for a second time. Back in Tehran, and independent of her contract for *Holiday*, she worked for three days on a "story for Pepsi-Cola (pure greed for money, but necessary)."<sup>7</sup>

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, Morath returned to Paris, although she had not yet photographed all the locations that Louis F. V. Mercier, picture editor at *Holiday*, had proposed. Letters to her family reveal that she had quite simply run out of film, and, given

a sudden rise in temperature, did not feel adequately equipped; she wanted to "re-organize" herself. By this she was referring to the need to sift through her material before contemplating continuing the journey.

This was one of Morath's earliest photo-reportages outside Europe. She had begun taking photographs in 1951, and had been a member of the Paris photographers' association Magnum Photos for three years, meaning that she was a beginner in comparison with her colleagues.<sup>8</sup> Two of her fellow Magnum photographers had already been to Iran: Henri Cartier-Bresson (in 1950, during his three-year trip to Asia), and Erich Lessing (in 1952, while taking photos for a report about a catastrophic locust plague and joint efforts by Soviet and US specialists to combat it). Morath was closely connected with both men: from 1953-54 she had been Cartier-Bresson's assistant, while she knew Lessing from her days in Vienna, where she had edited the magazine *Heute* and associated with other future members of Magnum from Austria, Franz Hubmann and, particularly, Ernst Haas.

A graduate in Romance languages, Morath had turned to journalism at an early stage and formed, in her own words, an efficient "picture/text team" with Haas; she had researched the stories and written the texts to be published while he had taken the photographs. As a team they were so convincing that Robert Capa, then head of Magnum, invited them to Paris – and as a result Morath's career there actually began as early as 1948-49, albeit not as a photographer but as a researcher and copywriter. With her Iran book, however, that relationship was reversed: Morath took the photos while a well-known journalist from the newspaper *Le Monde* wrote the text. That journalist, the somewhat older Eduard Sablier, was not only an acknowledged expert on the Middle East, but had also been born in Baghdad.

Morath's work as part of a picture/text team with Haas, and as an assistant to Cartier-Bresson, shared one important component: the preparation of stories. This meant that Morath compiled a variety of different information which enabled the respective photographer to precisely choose the locations and the motifs for his reportage, and helped to best utilize time (which was usually in short supply) and to meet up with the right contacts. We can assume that Morath also undertook such preparation for her own journeys, and that she potentially secured advice from her colleague Cartier-Bresson. Yet, with respect to this very relationship, her choice of travel destinations within Iran, and her focus on particular themes, demands further consideration.

Without doubt, Morath's primary concern would have been the requirements of her employers, and these were fairly well defined. *Holiday* had instructed her on those topics to be covered in the Middle East, specifically in Iran, where two themes were to be in focus: carpets and the blue mosques of Isfahan. (*Holiday*'s picture editor considered Persepolis too hackneyed – "a considerable amount of stock is available."<sup>9</sup>) The overall briefing for the Middle East included a wide range of keywords – antiquity, religion, dryness, location, landscape, resources, wars – each with short explanations. The apparent diversity of interests that the magazine wished to illustrate was accompanied by the clear requirement, expressed to Morath by Mercier, that she find "the one telling picture" which could summarize, in abbreviated form, one (or several) categories.<sup>10</sup> Morath also had a commission from the Standard Oil Company to document its oil refinery in Abadan, and another from the Pepsi-Cola Company, to photograph its new bottling plant and distribution system in Tehran. The critical tone and subliminal humor of these shots, no doubt intended by Morath, differentiates them from the others taken on the trip.

Morath explored Mercier's suggested themes, and she drew a fair amount of inspiration on the entire region from his list, though not entirely in the form expected by her clients. Admittedly, their requirements were understandable in technical, magazine-related terms, but for the demands that Morath, as a member of Magnum Photos, was expected to fulfill they were rather simple. And here we hit upon the primary reason for the self-proclaimed necessity of the

photographic agency: there was no need for Morath to neglect her own knowledge and viewpoints while working. She could assume that any pictures rejected by *Holiday* would nevertheless be distributed by Magnum itself, as indeed happened as early as September 1956 with her series on the New Year festivities in Tehran – the Middle East issue of *Holiday* did not appear until December.

### The Telling Picture

Mercier's expression "the telling picture" sounds like a straightforward reinterpretation of "the decisive moment," associated, in superficial usage, with the photographic practice of Magnum members and, particularly, with Cartier-Bresson. That one moment comprising a constellation of events, a spatial meeting of different people or optical elements transformed by the camera was, for many years to come, seen as the photographer's essential goal. The belief that such an image could come into being almost by itself owes something to the fetishization of chance by the Surrealists (or their interpreters), whose influence on both Cartier-Bresson and Morath has already been explored in detail.<sup>11</sup> Morath was adamant, however, that the translation of "decisive moment" falsifies and constricts Cartier-Bresson's original phrase *image à la sauvette*. It is worth considering where this transfer, extension, or confusion of meaning actually leads us. *Image à la sauvette* means a picture taken "secretly," one produced without the protagonist's knowledge. Yet a photograph of "the decisive moment" is seemingly not only produced secretly, but also at a very particular instant. When Mercier called upon a member of Magnum to search for the "telling picture," this perhaps already tacitly included these two conditions, as well an additional quality that might be described as "easily comprehensible."

Regarding the theme of carpets, *Holiday* instructed: "A color photo of one of these masterpieces nearing completion might do it for this part of the Near East."<sup>12</sup> Morath was fascinated by carpets, by their colors and patterns; her letters home and the illustrations in *De la Perse à l'Iran* are proof of this. She was, however, also looking for what one would today call the background story, and in the often tiny carpet workshops she came across women and children at work and documented them in a series of moving, highly atmospheric shots, to which she later added captions. In this context, the word "atmospheric" carries an unpleasant undertone. What I am trying to describe with the term is Morath's method of using the camera to capture the sense of confined, cramped space that the workers and small children had to endure. To achieve this, for instance, she exploited the poor lighting conditions in the rooms, and alternated between long-shots and close-ups from above and below. The image of three tiny children with their white headscarves knotting carpets sitting on a beam suspended high in the room – so high that they can probably not jump down on their own – most eloquently conveys the presence of constraint and danger. Here, the three above-mentioned requirements of the "telling picture" seem to converge (even if a small girl on the lower left edge of the picture is watching the photographer at work).

Morath took a less direct approach in the shot in which the knotting worker's hands are backlit behind the spanned warp threads; here the text explains that the women and girls dye their palms with henna to harden and protect the skin. This image, and the following one showing the supervisor at whose command the carpet-weavers determine colors, do indeed require explanatory captions if the depth of Morath's intention is to be conveyed clearly, or if we are to understand them as individual images. As a series, by contrast, even without accompanying texts the carpet workshop photos create an intense atmosphere; the use of light, line of vision, and reduced spatial depth foster a sense of space that non-verbally prepares us for Morath's message. The new selection of carpet photos which we have before us benefits

# HOLIDAY

A Curtis Publication

477 Madison Avenue, New York 22

PLaza 3-8728

LOUIS F. V. MERCIER, Picture Editor

March 14, 1956

Inge Morath  
Magnum Photos, Inc  
125 Faubourg St. Honore  
Paris, France

Dear Inge:

I am enclosing a research report summarizing these aspects of the Middle East which are likely to interest us, and also a further summarizing, i.e. a listing of the subjects we would like you to attempt.

I know you will keep in mind that we do not want, or at least cannot use, an exhaustive documentation on each country or even on each item listed, but will be looking for the one telling picture which will summarize, in most cases, the subject or category concerned.

We are interested in people and types of course, but we also need scenics, views and pictorials. Dawn and dusk can help vary the tone of the spreads in the ultimate layout.

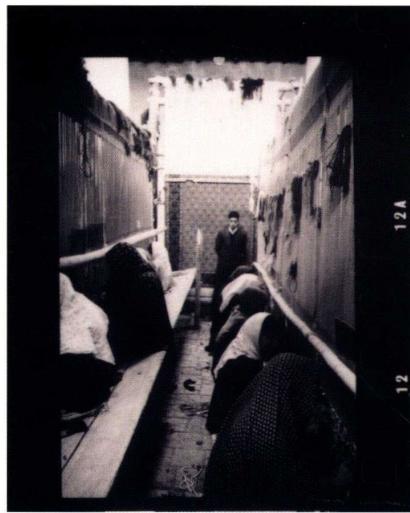
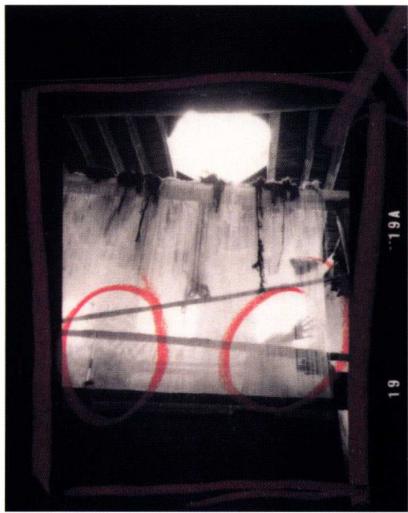
We guarantee \$1200, and will of course pick up your day to day expenses while working for us. It is possible our final use of pictures will be worth more.

Good luck to you. Letters of assignment have been sent under separate cover.

Much love,

*Lou*

LFVM/jjs  
cc: John Merris



precisely because our understanding of the situation described in the individual images is produced through the density of the series. Neither *Holiday* nor *De la Perse à l'Iran* displayed this quality.

**“...[T]he Place I Longed to Know Had No Political Name”<sup>13</sup>**

Particularly striking in this context is that the images and texts in both *Holiday* and *De la Perse à l'Iran* reveal very different approaches and expressions. While Alan Moorehead's essay is introduced with the words, “The Middle East. Here is one of the most explosive parts of the world!” and proceeds to focus on the sharp differences within the region and its individual societies, only the first photo permits such an aggressive interpretation: a close-up of a Bedouin with a hunting falcon, brandishing his rifle towards the camera.<sup>14</sup> In the remaining images, all we see is the colorful pleasantness of traditional scenes. Both Moorehead's coverage for *Holiday* and Sablier's commentaries in the book breathe the spirit of the Cold War. A fear of communist undercurrents in the Middle East prevails, combined with a derogatory view of native efforts to reduce Western influence over oil riches. The underlying tone of these texts is shaped by generalizations and prejudices, both explicit and implied.

Looking at this new selection of Morath's photographs of Iran, one notices how sharply they contrast with such views; indeed they seem to contradict the accompanying texts even more strongly than the original selection for *De la Perse à l'Iran*. The craftsmen tackling their arduous tasks and the vibrant life of the bazaars certainly do not exemplify the legendary “indolence” or “passivity” of the inhabitants often evoked in the texts. Yet, in all likelihood, Morath must have been at least superficially acquainted with Moorehead's publications on the Middle East, in which he described his experiences as a reporter there during the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of her stay, Morath visited places on the Caspian Sea that were neither historical nor particularly picturesque locations; these were sites where Moorehead had observed the Soviet troops when they invaded Iran in 1941. It is also conceivable that Morath was genuinely interested in the events Moorehead described, as they addressed a theater of war in a country that was seen, at the time, as falling under German influence. The first Pahlavi Shah had modernized the country's infrastructure with assistance from German engineers,

260 (left) Carpet workshop, Isfahan. Most of the women and girls have henna stained palms, which hardens the skin and protects them from painful cuts (enlargement from contact sheet).

260 (right) Carpet workshop, Isfahan. As the overseer calls out the color, the women and children knot the wool rhythmically into the weave (enlargement from contact sheet).

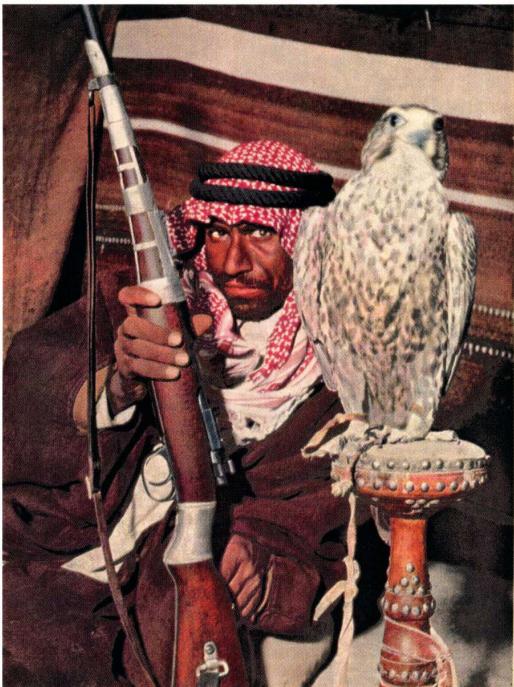
who built Iran's first railway system. The change of name from Persia to Iran, in 1934, is likewise attributed to the influence of the Germans,<sup>16</sup> and was used in the title of Morath's 1958 book as a synonym for the transition from the traditional Persia to the modern state.<sup>17</sup> It is no coincidence that the photographs of the oil refineries are to be found at the end of *De la Perse à l'Iran*; up until then we see only pictures of traditional life and historical sites.

What particularly catches the eye in Morath's photographs, published here for the first time, is their strict separation into thematic groups. Firstly, there are the examples of the country's "great history," including ancient monuments such as Persepolis and masterpieces of Islamic architecture. These are followed by shots that could be described as "traditional environments," showing, for example, ethnic craft techniques, nomads, and women in traditional garb; this group is by far the largest. Finally, there are photographs dedicated to "modern Iran," the aforementioned images of the oil industry and those taken for Pepsi showing the bottling plant, advertising, and delivery trucks. Only in a few exceptions do these different worlds concur in a single image; the street scenes rarely include automobiles, for example, and when they do they seem almost coincidental in the background.

It goes without saying that Morath's portrait of Iran was a very personal one. In 1953-54, for example, the slightly younger Swiss photographer Nicolas Bouvier worked in almost the same locations, producing images that showed modern life in the midst of the old, and that explored contradictions and inconsistencies. He documented, for example, dusty streets and decrepit bridges, things that Morath only describes in her letters home. But Morath insists that each observer tells – indeed has to tell – a different story, and not simply because each person experiences something different. No two photographers, she writes, even in the same place at the same time, will return with the same pictures: "The personal vision is usually there from the beginning: result of a special chemistry of background and feelings, traditions and their rejection, of sensibility and voyeurism."<sup>18</sup> Thus, she was not pre-disposed towards specific thematic groups because the shooting script from *Holiday* magazine pushed her in a particular direction, but rather as a consequence of the distinct components shaping her personal vision.

Morath had distinct ideas about travel generally, and the Persian trip in particular. "I always preferred territories: Iran in the Middle East [...] Spain and Mexico, Russia and China, countries whose influence extended beyond their borders, 'mother cultures,'" she wrote. "[...] Most of the time it was literature that raised my enthusiasm for a certain place, visual and popular art that stimulated my eye..."<sup>19</sup> This well-read daughter from a good middle-class home must have imagined many associations when picturing the Persian "mother culture," starting with the antagonism with Classical Greek culture through to the invasion of Alexander the Great, from *1,001 Nights* to Goethe's *East-West Divan* – it was a rich fabric from which she could weave her "childlike dreamworld" of Persia.<sup>20</sup> Later, no doubt, this was charged with the idea of Zarathustra (likely more as a concept in Nietzsche's thought than the actual founder of the religion), and the notion of an "Aryan race," something that supposedly linked the Germans and Persians closely, and would have been emphasized by teachers during her school days.

This is not to suggest that Morath visited Iran in search of shared Aryan roots – indeed the opposite was more likely the case, as she considered her German mother tongue to be a major handicap (when abroad she constantly found herself identified with the aggressors of the Second World War). The question is whether her ideas about travel, possibly deriving from such influences, enabled Morath to identify with the texts that accompanied her photographs of Iran. In fact, the large body of travel volumes that she made later in her career seems to indicate that Morath nurtured the illusion that there was something we could perhaps term the "apolitical background of culture," something one could approach using the means afforded by the photographic image. This returns us directly to Morath's belief that it was easier to



A falcon still rules the Middle Eastern deserts. Living by age-old tribal codes, one Bedouin (left) glances nervously in his tent, held up against the blistering sun. A falconer's apprentice (right) waits while his hunting hawk takes off in a wild charge across the dusty Jordanian wastelands, hunting the hot and dry air the chief's command.



## The Middle East

*Here is one of the most explosive parts of the world!*  
A brilliant HOLIDAY writer revisits these ancient lands and finds them just as restless, as baffling, and as intriguing as ever

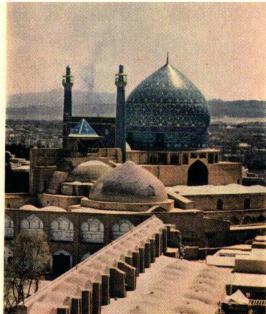
by Alan Moorehead

The aircraft coming in to land on the muddy river with a line of palms on either bank, a blue haze of dust and smoke over the city and, however, the great dome of the mosque, the Shah Tahmasp rises in a blaze of mosaics of Persian art. More delicate in the Mosque of the Mother of the Shah (right), especially the rows of prayer niches shown with their minute gold and silver inlay.

The aircraft comes in to land on the muddy river with a line of palms on either bank, a blue haze of dust and smoke over the city and, however, the great dome of the mosque, the Shah Tahmasp rises in a blaze of mosaics of Persian art. More delicate in the Mosque of the Mother of the Shah (right), especially the rows of prayer niches shown with their minute gold and silver inlay.

Men of distinction take a呼吸 of hookah or water pipe and smoke the city and, however, the great dome of the mosque, the Shah Tahmasp rises in a blaze of mosaics of Persian art. Just why it should be called the Middle East is a matter of debate. The Near East, where is the Middle, where is the Near East? Just one thousand years ago that fifty years ago the Ottoman empire was known as the Near East to distinguish it from the Far East, which, with the collapse of Turkey, power a middle ensued: people began to use the term Middle East to describe lands all the Muslim-majority countries from Egypt eastward to India, and the Near East—so easily forgotten. There is no particular logic in this, but this subject will be brief put to it to find any logic anywhere. The Persians, who were the first to make the triumph of matter over mind and of emotion over reason.

51



The Shah Tahmasp rises in a blaze of mosaics of Persian art. The Mosque of the Mother of the Shah (right), especially the rows of prayer niches shown with their minute gold and silver inlay.

This has happened a dozen times in the last two thousand years. The Greeks were supplanted by the Romans, the Romans by the Byzantines. Then in the 7th and 8th Centuries the Mohammedan Arabs came in from the deserts, and tribes of Genghis Khan came down from central Asia and so wrecked the established systems that much of the Middle East was left to the Turks. The Turks arrived and they managed in spite of the Crusades to keep an mighty empire for nearly a century. After that the British took over, and the Turks, too, have gone. Today we are in the middle of an added period when the Middle East is being torn apart day from conquerors, and what happens next?

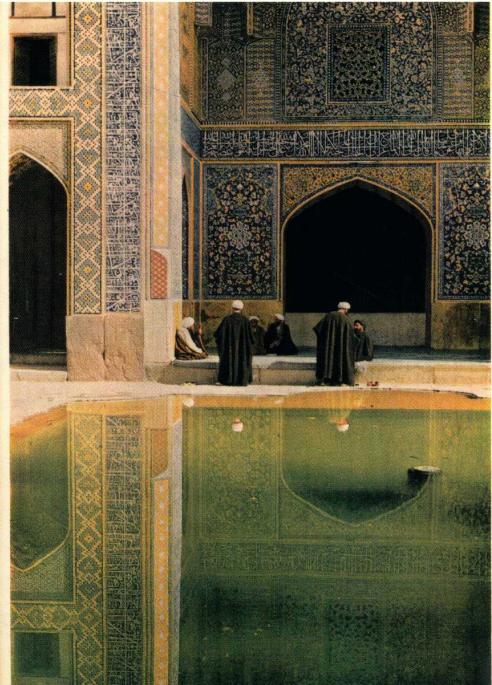
There is, however, one new factor in the scene and perhaps it may be an ominous one. What has happened in the past is the discovery of oil. One bound of the Middle East has come from the middle primitive poverty to wealth beyond the dreams of Texas. Not only in

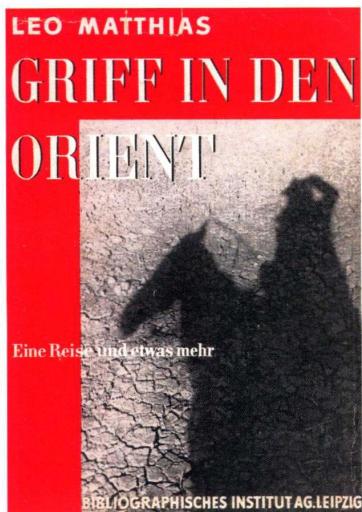
countries, but whole countries have become so rich and so hardly know what they are doing with their money. Some, like Iraq, as we shall see, have been ruled by a tribe of sheiks; others, like Saudi Arabia and Jordan, are ruled by a tribe of sheiks; the Persians, like the Shah Tahmasp, are engaged in a wild spending spree of a particularly vicious kind. The Arab states have a tradition of handling great wealth with a minimum of care. The other side of this writing—that the West is still the trend, holding its own, while the Islamic world is still trying to influence in Middle East affairs, is also true. The question is, will the arms from the distance, let us say, the moment when the foreign rulers with their trained administrators are not yet enough Arab technicians among the workers. Hence the Caucasians among the workers, and the general atmosphere of crassness and vulgarity that is now the politics. One is the luke-warm war against Israel. Another is the purely religious struggle between the Moslems for the leadership of the Arab world, and the Moslems of Cyprus and of who eventually will gain control of the Middle East—Russia, America, or Britain. All this is a great nomadic and is supposed to be

over. The first two issues are most likely about as valid as the officials on the beach, and as a rule have not been made about it. The third is about as valid as the beach, and is heard you hear for the first time the question that is going to be repeated again and again: "What is the Middle East? Is this your first trip?" You have been here before, the second question is put. You must have been here before, the third. There is: here in Israel more than ever saw these hundreds of little houses on the bare hillsides, these farms and plantations that have sprung up like mushrooms and like strawberries in the sand, and the streams of mobile iron. Yet nothing is familiar. Tel Aviv was always the most cosmopolitan city in the world, a little New York to the sober Washingtonians, and Haifa was always the cosmopolitan. These distinctions still remain. Nor have the Moslem tribesmen come back for the wide fields of wheat above.

*Continued on Page 52.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY INGE MORATH





undertake photojournalism in the 1950s. She was less constrained by inhibitions regarding the direct knowledge offered by images than later photographers such as Peress. By the time of his visit to Iran, the perceived relationship between photography and knowledge had changed to such an extent that the editors of Peress' *Telex Iran* would note that photographs "do little to describe another people and place, but go a long way towards measuring the distance separating perceptions and cultures."<sup>21</sup> In other words: photographs cannot show you another culture, they can only illustrate how far away you are from understanding that culture.

#### Persia in Book Form

In mid-1950s Paris, what could Morath have drawn upon to obtain information on the country which she would be visiting? As far as Persia was concerned, there were several already classic examples of a romantic approach to a distant land. Freya Stark, for instance, an author of travel books widely read at the time, portrayed her experiences in the Near and Middle East both as a dangerous adventure<sup>22</sup> and a highly varied travelogue,<sup>23</sup> and, somewhat later, as the re-enactment of an event from the distant past.<sup>24</sup> Although she did describe the problems of workers and of women in a number of passages, which facilitated general conclusions on the current situation, she was not explicitly concerned with analyzing such potential conflicts. The main objective of her texts is autobiographical: to express the experiences of a Western woman in an "exotic," Oriental location.

Accordingly, the photographs taken in Persia by Stark, beginning in 1929 and published thereafter, include as one of their fundamental elements her means of transport throughout the country, the streets or railway tracks, as well as the quarters in which she stayed and individual acquaintances made on the journey; people whose roles were never more than those of extras. The reports of other authors on Iran from the early 1930s were very similar in approach – practically all of them were illustrated with their authors' own photos – and sometimes this subjectivity is visible even in their titles.<sup>25</sup> The self-referentiality of such travel reports is particularly evident in the cover picture of Leo Matthias' *Griff in den Orient*,<sup>26</sup> which confronts us with the shadow of the traveler taking his own photo on his camel.

The Swiss writer, journalist, and photographer Annemarie Schwarzenbach, who was familiar with Matthias' book, took the intrinsic narcissism displayed by travelers within a foreign culture and landscape to new heights. She had already anticipated her trip to Iran as a journey into her own (more than complicated) "inner life," and accordingly experienced it as such. As a result, her 1934 report<sup>27</sup> (and to a greater extent other texts based on her trip published much later) perhaps constitutes the culmination and closure of a view of the Orient as a "phantom." This view, both formulated by and proliferated through the intellectual influence of Pierre Loti,<sup>28</sup> envisioned the Orient as a "Paradise lost" of the European imagination, and allowed every actual encounter to climax, to a greater or lesser extent, in the confirmation of such preconceived ideas.

From this perspective, even the perception of undeniable changes could be interpreted on a purely subjective basis. In 1933, the extremely well-educated British traveler, Robert Byron, commented on the construction of railway tracks which was underway in Iran at the time: "But its purpose is a question of psychology rather than of economics. For the modern Persian it is a symbol of national self-respect [...] To us, after all we have suffered at the mercy of the international combustion engine, the grunt of steam seemed as companionable and old-fashioned as the rattle of a four-wheeler." The same applied to the banning of traditional dress by the Shah. There are many ways of discussing this problem, but for Byron it meant that his nostalgic notion of the Iranians as heirs to an ancient civilization was disturbed by new regulations on clothing and headdress. Here, as we learn from his diary-like travel report, there was only one solution: "...we escaped from these trivialities into the glory of Antiquity."<sup>29</sup>

Only at first glance are these authors, who were more at home with words than pictures, irrelevant to Morath, who entered Iranian territory almost two decades later. Although we cannot know with certainty to which books she had access, we know from her own statements that she drew mainly upon literary sources when preparing for her travels. Pierre Loti, for example, a figure who has today assumed an almost mythical stature, was an omnipresent writer who shaped the views of a generation of French readers on the "Orient." Morath had been living in Paris, intermittently, since 1949, and would have felt Loti's influence even if she never read his texts. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that the young Inge Morath had no interest in reports of other women who similarly undertook trips as journalists, and that she was not familiar with writers such as Freya Stark or Annemarie Schwarzenbach.

Morath's photographs indeed indicate that she was not entirely aloof from the tradition of reception of the Orient described here. Byron's rejection of the railway, to name but one example, was perhaps reflected in a different guise by the fact that Morath does not touch on this topic at all. She separates the "modern" from the "ancient" by transferring all that was contemporary to the south, the oil-producing region. In Tehran and in the country's interior she did not, like Byron, take refuge in the contemplation of ancient buildings and treasures, but focused her attention on traditional craftsmen and traders, mens' clubs, and womens' quarters. It seems Morath did not condemn Iranian mens' modern clothing, yet it is undeniable that she was particularly interested in traditional costumes. In a certain way, she therefore sought out those pure, unadulterated situations which, acting as "telling images," might inform anyone who looked at them about what should be considered "typical." Despite this, Morath's pictures avoid the picturesque; they are neither idealized nor sentimental.

While there is continuity between the travel literature of the years between the wars and that of the 1950s regarding travelers' approaches to foreign places, attitudes toward photography and its potential had changed radically. Equally changed was the presentation of published travel reports with photographic illustrations. The works described above used pictures as a supplement to their texts rather than featuring spreads of independent images placed with equal weight

alongside text sections. The development of new forms of presentation was partly the result of technological innovations, which had made high-quality printing more affordable than in pre-war days. On the other hand, the new confidence manifested by photographers, as exemplified by the establishment of Magnum Photos and encouraged by its popularity, also played a fundamental role. Robert Delpire, a companion of many Magnum members (and of Cartier-Bresson and Morath in particular), was at the time involved in creating his own genre of publication, something between travel literature and the contemporary photo-book.<sup>30</sup> Already in 1955, a year before he accompanied Morath to Persia, he had published her book *Guerre à la Tristesse*<sup>31</sup> on the fiesta in Pamplona. Delpire went on to publish *De la Perse à l'Iran* in 1958 – the same year that he also published the first edition of Robert Frank's famous book *Les Américains*.

While Delpire himself asserts that she was deeply involved in the creation of her own books,<sup>32</sup> it is no longer possible to ascertain what part Morath actually played in selecting the pictures for her various publications with him and to what degree she bowed to his wishes as editor and publisher. She was, doubtless, less experienced and less assertive than Frank. Accordingly, it may be appropriate not only to publish Morath's heretofore unpublished pictures, but also to consider them in relation to the (published) work of her contemporaries.

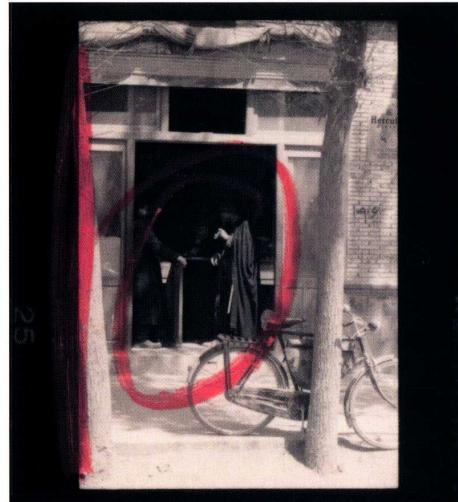
### A Moral Position?

The book *Indiens pas Morts* was published by Delpire in 1956, and was originally to have presented photographs of Peruvian Indian life by Pierre Verger and Werner Bischof. Bischof, an early member of Magnum Photos, was killed in an automobile accident in Peru while shooting for the book. After Bischof's death, Delpire added to the book a selection of photographs by the Swiss photographer, Robert Frank. Delpire had published Frank's work alongside photographs by Cartier-Bresson in the revue *NEUF*, in 1952. Another selection of Frank's photographs had been published by Edward Steichen in the catalog for *The Family of Man*, an exhibition that he conceived for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1955.<sup>33</sup> Morath was not involved in any of these publications, but it is inconceivable – especially in relation to Bischof – that she was unfamiliar with them. Whether she was ever introduced to Frank by Delpire is unknown, but it is safe to speculate that she was familiar with, if not influenced by, his photographs.

In *Indiens Pas Morts*, there appears to be a common approach among the contributing photographers, something that today we might call "humanist" photography; a style that was emphasized by Steichen in *The Family of Man*. The pictorial traditions to which these images belong, and particularly the political context within which Steichen's ideas materialized, have already been explored at length. At its most simplistic, this approach depicted people photographed in what the West then regarded as the "remote" parts of the world, and suggested that although they might be poor and worn down by fate, their "human dignity" was entirely independent of the constellations of power politics.<sup>34</sup>

While *Guerre à la Tristesse*, Morath's book of photographs of Spain, could possibly be interpreted as an extremely personal take on this concept of fellowship and compassion (perhaps leaving out the series on the matador's dress, with its erotic overtones), many of her pictures of Iran simply rule out such an interpretation. Even in the particularly intense series about carpet production, her message is complex and certainly cannot be deciphered through its individual pictures. In this context, perhaps, we might put a positive spin on photography writer Andy Grundberg's unkindly meant statement: "There is a difference between a photograph of a confusing situation and a confusing photograph."<sup>35</sup>

How, in fact, could it be possible for an individual photograph to encapsulate, simply, a complex (confusing) situation? Morath's shot of two men in a teahouse in Quazvin confronts us with a scene of vexing alienation. The atmosphere



reflects a certain sense of humor (trained in the surreal) and might thus be compared with the kind of interiors that Cartier-Bresson liked to photograph, but the people in it are frozen into a wooden pose. Morath cannot have photographed them "in secret;" her presence, which they obviously found disruptive, is almost tangible. Neither does "Entrance to a tea-house, Isfahan" present us with a merry group, but this time the photograph was clearly taken "secretly." It is often the case that Morath appears to be looking from the outside into a seemingly hermetic situation. In the case of such unobserved moments, she is nearly always further removed from her subjects in Iran than she ever was in her earlier work, for example in Spain.

But again, how would it have been possible for her – even in the secluded quarters of the women whom she kept company at their Zoroastrian ceremonies – to gain a closer insight into the way that society functioned? Normally, Morath attempted to learn at least the rudiments of the language of the countries she visited; in Persia this was not possible. And so she appears – perhaps with the aid of the translator? – more to have felt her way towards her subjects. In her photographs of Iran, it is particularly those instances where no visual or literary conventions were available, or where personal experience apparently triumphed over what she had been taught, that her images affect us most intensely.

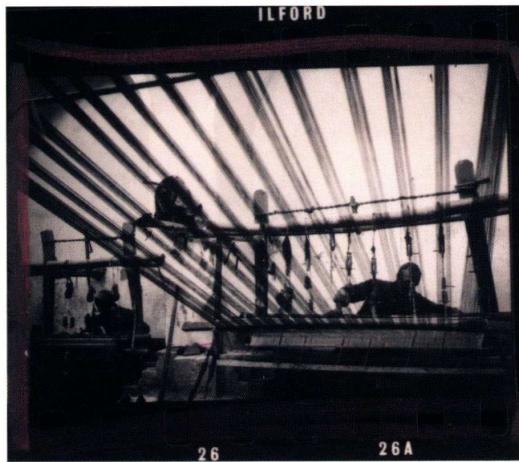
A good example of this is the way that Morath depicts the workers in her photograph "Silk Loom, Yazd." As in her series in the carpet workshops, the available light in this room was not favorable for the photographer's work, yet the somewhat overexposed silk threads give a quite virtual quality to the "screen" that Morath put between herself and the workers, by which she is blurring both distances and personal features. She chose a strange viewpoint for the photograph – perhaps a reference to the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*? – for which she seems to have crawled on her knees underneath the machine. This unusual perspective creates an impression of density and tight space, presenting a technology that has survived centuries and, at the same time, giving evidence of the hard personal exertion of the worker.

At such times, the quality of incompleteness that characterizes Morath's work is reminiscent of Robert Frank's American pictures, but they lack his certainty. Frank always appeared to have formed an opinion as to what his camera captured; he preferred to separate himself from the conventional impressions experienced with his subjects. Morath appears to be far removed from this kind of self-assurance. Yet, precisely because of this seeming uncertainty, her images

266 (left) Interior of a Persian tea-house, Qazvin (enlargement from contact sheet).

266 (right) Enhance to the tea house, Isfahan (enlargement from contact sheet).

267 Silk Loom, Yazd (enlargement from contact sheet).



from the 1950s appear remarkably prescient, pointing forward to a time when belief in the possibility of an authentic photographic report is long past. This is the direct result of our seeing here, perhaps for the first time, Morath's photographs presented as she made them, in extended series.

Looking at the differences in the approaches of photojournalists of Morath's generation, characterized by Robert Capa, and of the 1970s and 80s, characterized by Gilles Peress, Andy Grundberg has written of an "implicit abandonment of any moral position."<sup>36</sup> Considered anachronistically, in her photographs of Iran, Morath appears to be actually closer to Peress than to Capa, whom she so greatly admired. Morath does not contextualize her work historically or politically; she makes no conspicuous effort to thematize either the modernization of lifestyle, the implications of Western influence, or the restrictions of a dictatorial regime. But neither does she adopt a "moral position," in the Western sense that so prejudiced the writers of the texts for *Holiday* and *De la Perse à l'Iran*.

Rather, in these somewhat conventional educational projects for middle-class readers, Morath chose instead to preference all that is "foreign," and at times to pursue stereotypes – though she in no way belittled her subjects, either through pitiful condescension or sharp slapstick. The moments that Morath captured in Iran are seldom "secret" (*à la sauvette*), "decisive," or "telling" in the sense of a dazzling elucidation of an otherwise hermetic situation. Indeed, Morath's Iranians do not belong at all to Edward Steichen's *Family of Man*; she simply does not attempt to bridge historical and political differences between subject and viewer. Rather than eliciting our sense of sympathy – as the humanist approach invariably requires – Morath appears to wish to convey her own perplexity. In this respect, her photographs, like those of Peress more than twenty years later, "go a long way toward measuring the distance separating perceptions and cultures."

*Translated by Monte Packham*

- 1 Bouvier, Nicolas, in: *Unsterbliches Blau. Reisen nach Afghanistan*, Roger Perret, ed. (Zürich: Scheidegger und Spiess 2003), p. 93. Bouvier and Thierry Vernet published their Iran photographs first in: *L'usage du monde* (Paris: Ed. La Découverte, 1988).
- 2 Peress, Gilles. *Telex Iran: in the Name of the Revolution*. (Zurich: Scalo, 1997).
- 3 Morath, Inge, in "About Myself," *Inge Morath: Life as a Photographer*. (Munich: Gina Kehayoff Verlag, 1999), p. 12.
- 4 Letter to her parents, March 20, 1956. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 5 Card to her parents April 12, 1956. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 6 Letter to her parents, April 26, 1956. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 7 Letter to her parents, April 20, 1956. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 8 Morath herself dated the start of her career as 1952, when she bought a Leica and started training under Simon Guttmann in London.
- 9 "Shooting Script for the Middle East," *Holiday Magazine*, undated. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 10 Letter from Mercier to Inge Morath, March 14, 1956. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 11 For example, Lahs-Gonzales, Olivia, in "To Unseal the Deeper Nature," *Inge Morath. Life as a Photographer*, op. cit., p. 61
- 12 "Shooting Script for the Middle East," *Holiday Magazine*, undated. Archives, Inge Morath Foundation, New York.
- 13 Morath, Inge. *Russian Journal 1965-1990*. (New York: Aperture, 1991), p. 7. Morath speaks here of Russia instead of the Soviet Union, but this expression could also refer to Persia instead of Iran.
- 14 *Holiday Magazine* vol. 20, no. 6 (1956), pp. 50-184; here: pp. 50-51.
- 15 Moorhead, Alan. *The End in Africa*, (London: George Jumbo, 1944).
- 16 Iran is derived from the Middle Persian word "eran." "Eran-sahr" means "Land of the Aryans, Iranians." See: Wiesehöfer, Josef. *Das frühe Persien. Geschichte eines antiken Weltreichs*, (Munich: Beck, 1999), p. 9.
- 17 This contrast of "Persia" to "Iran" was already prevalent in earlier German book titles that Morath could well have known. In two cases the books were written by authors who also worked in photography, namely Axel von Graefe's *Iran, das neue Persien*, (Berlin & Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1937); Edmund Jaroljmek's *Das andere Iran. Persien in den Augen eines Europäers* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951).
- 18 Morath, Inge, in "About Myself," *Inge Morath: Life as a Photographer*, op. cit., p. 13.
- 19 Ibid., p. 15.
- 20 Morath, Inge. *Russisches Tagebuch 1965-1990*, op. cit., p. 7 (see footnote 10).
- 21 Editors, in *Telex Iran*, op. cit.
- 22 Stark, Freya. *The Valleys of the Assassins and other Persian Travels*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952).
- 23 Stark, Freya. *East is West*, (London: John Murray, 1945).
- 24 Stark, Freya. *Alexander's Path from Caria to Cilicia*, (London: John Murray, 1958).
- 25 Schwarzenbach, Annemarie. *Winter in Vorderasien. Tagebuch einer Reise*, (Zurich Rascher Verlag, 1934); Maillart, Ella. *The Cruel Way*, (London: W. Heinemann, 1947); Jaroljmek, Edmund. *Das andere Iran. Persien mit den Augen eines Europäers*, op. cit.
- 26 Matthias, Leo. *Griff in den Orient. Eine Reise und etwas mehr*, (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut., 1931).
- 27 Schwarzenbach, Annemarie. *Winter in Vorderasien. Tagebuch einer Reise*. op. cit.
- 28 Loti, Pierre (Julien Viaud). *Fantom d'Orient*, (Paris: Americ, 1892). Edward Said has devoted an extremely influential book to these problems: *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1979).
- 29 Robert Byron. *The Road to Oxiana*, (London: Oxford, 1992), p. 36; first published in London in 1937.
- 30 Among others, Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Les Danses à Bali*, (Paris: Delpire, 1954); and *Indiens pas Morts*, with photographs by Werner Bischof, Robert Frank, Pierre Verger and an essay by Georges Arnaud, (Paris: Delpire, 1956).
- 31 Morath, Inge. *Guerre à la Tristesse*. (Paris: Robert Delpire, 1955). With an essay by Dominique Aubier.
- 32 Interview with John Jacob, Paris, March 5, 2008.
- 33 Steichen's *Family of Man* was, moreover, a thematic reiteration of the 1947 series of picture stories conceived by John Morris, then picture editor for the *Ladies Home Journal*, titled "People Are People the World Over," a major commission for the newly founded Magnum Photos. Morris would later become the agency's director.
- 34 For example, Stimson, Blake, in "Photographic Being and The Family of Man," *The Pivot of the World Photography and Its Nation*, (Cambridge: MIT, 2006), pp. 59-104.
- 35 Grundberg, Andy, in "Magnum's Postwar Paradox," *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography, 1974-1989*, (New York: Aperture, 1992), p. 194.
- 36 Ibid., p. 194.
- 37 See footnotes 2 and 19.

**Documents**

## ATTESTATION

Je soussigné, GEORGES NINAUD, Directeur de l'Agence de Presse "MAGNUM PHOTOS", 125, Fbg. St. Honoré, membre du Syndicat National des Agences de Presse, certifie que Madame INGE MORATH-BIRCH, reporter photographe attaché à notre Agence, doit se rendre à l'étranger pour y effectuer des reportages photographiques qui recevront une distribution internationale par les soins de MAGNUM PHOTOS.

Madame INGE MORATH-BIRCH sera porteur du matériel photographique dont le détail suit :

APPAREILS PHOTOGRAPHIQUES  
Leica M3 No.735614  
Leica M3 No.703717  
Leica M3 No.703719  
Polaroid Land Camera

OBJECTIVES INTERCHANGEABLES  
Summarit 1099410 50mm 1,5  
Summarit 1099157 50mm 1,5  
Summicron 1125348 50mm 2  
Biogon 1420342 21mm 4,5  
Summaron 1149862 35mm 3,5  
Angénieux 383853 90mm 1,8  
Elmar 1139596 90mm 4  
Hektor 1134882 135MM 4,5  
Hektor 1135590 135mm 4,5

Magnum Photos prie les autorités compétentes de bien vouloir faciliter la tâche de son reporter photographe dans la mesure du possible et les en remercie à l'avance.

*George Ninaud*

Georges Ninaud,  
Directeur, Magnum Photos.

vu pour certification matérielle.

de la signature de :

*NINAUD George*

apposée

*c-dessus*

Paris le 13 MARS 1956

Le Commissaire de Police.



SUBJECT LIST FOR INGE MORATH ON MIDDLE EAST

SAUDI ARABIA

Tribal desert Arab life. Tents, fleet horses, etc.

Pearl fishing at Bahrein

Some aspect of oil if it makes a picture, perhaps an important personage involved.

JORDAN

The holy places of Christianity. (See research). Try to work in camels, donkeys, earthen jugs, and such details of biblical atmosphere.

Something on each, if possible, of Jerash, Karak, and Petra.

LEBANON

This seems to be the most Holiday-ish of the countries, so we would like to have a little extra coverage on at least one of the resorts mentioned.

Something on the cultural archaics, at Biles perhaps, done artistically (!)

Beirut as a pleasant city.

SYRIA

Damascus. A small takeout of interesting items. Swordmakers, bazzaars, haggling, market activity, waterfront, etc.

IRAQ

Baghdad. Atmosphere. Perhaps "art" treatments of items in the museum.

Someone flying<sup>on</sup> a magic carpet.

IRAN

Persepolis

Carpets

Mosques at Isfahan

cc: John Merris

## PHOTO SCRIPT FOR THE NEAR EAST

### General

Moorehead's piece describes the Middle East as an area roughly the size of the United States, including:

<del>          </del>	Iraq
Saudi Arabia	Iran
Jordan	The Lebanon
Syria	<del>          </del>

Highlights in a very brief general consideration of the area are:

1. antiquity--The Near East is the cradle of modern civilization; it was in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates that man as a civilized being is supposed to have emerged. The oldest continuously inhabited city and town in the world are in the Near East. Ruins of successive civilizations--Hittite, Roman, Greek, Egyptian, etc.--abound throughout the region and many imposing ruins attest to thousands of years of civilization.
2. religion--The Near East was the birthplace of three great religions--Mohammedanism, Judaism and Christianity. Mecca is the most holy city for the Moslem World; Jerusalem for the Christian World and, of course, Israel is the land of the Jew.
3. dryness--By and large, the Near East is one of the driest regions in the world. Water is nearly everywhere at a premium and the whole manner of living for the Near East is based on water, or the lack of water. Where it occurs, as along the Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates, numerous oases and other spots where rainfall is fairly abundant due to altitude or other considerations, agriculture is practiced on an intensive scale. Where water is missing, the inhabitants' way of life is based on nomadism or a transhumance economy.
4. location--The Near East countries are located at the crossroads of the East and West. This has meant that many of the peoples are great traders and the whole area is laced by ancient and modern caravan and truck routes. Trading is the finely developed art in such cities as Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, etc.
5. landscape--The Near East means two or three things in terms of landscape--great stretches of desert sand, towering peaks of volcanic or other derivations, from whence rise the great river systems which bring life to the low-lying super dry areas.
6. resources--Mainly very poor, with the exception of oil which has recently made the Near East the powerhouse for much of the world. Most of the 80 million or so inhabitants of the area live off the land in a subsistence form of agriculture; a few live off highly specialized crafts as the making of Oriental rugs; some are highly developed traders as the Syrians; some are devoted to a typical desert economy of trading and raiding; others to

a transhumance form of economy seeking the moister highlands in the summer and the warmer valleys in the winter. Certain areas have a highly developed tourist economy, as Lebanon which has long been known as a sort of Switzerland of the Near East. In the larger cities and towns a growing industrialization is taking place and finally the procuring and shipping of oil from beneath the desert sands is absorbing an ever increasing number of workers.

7. wars--lying as it does at the crossroads of the East and West and embracing three major religions and too many to list minor sects and offshoots, the Near East has been subjected to wars of one kind or another ever since civilization began. When the various tribes were not warring among themselves outside powers had stepped in to add to the confusion. Roman towns, Greek temples, Crusader castles all attest to the constant struggle that has gone on in these areas for countless generations.

Out of this welter of impressions of what the Near East means and is, the following photo script is suggested to get in all the countries and all the facets of life of this huge area.

Other possibilities--pearl fishing on the Gulf at Bahrein, the famous Arab dhows used for trading in the Persian Gulf.

#### Jordan

This is the Holy Land for Christianity and photos should be taken with this in mind.

In Jordan are:

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in Jerusalem--site of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Garden of Gethsemane. The Church of the Nativity. The Mount of Olives. The tomb of Lazarus at Bethany. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem which commemorates the spot of Jesus' birth. Rachel's Tomb. Solomon's Pools. Jericho--the site of the oldest walled city in the world. The Mount of Temptation. Etc.

Other places which should not be missed in Jordan are:

Jerash--60 miles north of Amman--one of the most complete examples of a provincial Roman city and the ruins at Amman, ancient Philadelphia.

Karak--the famous Crusader castle.

Petra--the "rose-red city half as old as time." A city carved out of sheer rock by the Nabateans around the 5th Century B.C. This is a three-day trip but well worth it.

Thus, while Christianity should be the theme for photos of Jordan there are other places which might best illustrate the other facets of what makes up and is the Near East--ruins, etc.

Damascus is a great desert port--a white city set in a green oasis surrounded by the tawny desert. For over a thousand years it has been a port of embarkation for the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Ghuta or Garden of Damascus is miles of brilliant green fields, market gardens, orchards, threaded with water in the irrigation channels. Damascus has souks as fine as any city. The largest is the Long Market, over a quarter of a mile long, high and vaulted, emerging into an open street flanked by a well-preserved Roman arcade. In this market are sold all kinds of goods--brocades, prints, metal goods, etc., and this sight of men in Arab dress haggling in the markets is as typical as any of Syria and, in micro relief, of the trading of the Near East. Considerable archaeological work and many restorations are going on in and around Damascus. For instance, the desert chateau of El Heir, built in 727 A.D., has been transported to the city as have the subterranean family tombs transported from Palmyra. The Great Mosque has superb mosaics. El Azem palace is the culmination of modern domestic Arab architecture, in the early 18th Century. Near the Great Mosque is the tomb of Saladin.

The ruins at Palmyra are those of a great desert port city of 30,000 people which existed in the first and second centuries A.D. only to wither and die. However, the ruins are an imposing sight and again a salient impression of the Near East in toto, a region which has undergone countless invasions.

Latakia has long been known for its tobacco and there is some important money here and imposing homes based on this tobacco money.

Around Aleppo there are numerous so-called beehive cities--made of mud and clay with high conical roofs. At Aleppo the great souks are the main center of the city's activities. Here cottons, carpets, silks, silver, saddles, a street of the blacksmiths where nails are still made by hand, etc. Also near Aleppo are the ruins of many Christian cities of the 4th and 5th Centuries--the so-called 'dead towns' of the Christian era.

#### Iraq

Iraq is the country nurtured by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, ancient Mesopotamia where civilization is supposed to have begun on this planet. A walk through the museum at Bagdad is a walk through man's time on this planet. Here one can see the earliest sickles made merely of baked clay; the first potters wheels; the first true portrait known; the death pits at Ur in which entire segments of a society dating back 29 centuries B.C. were buried--chariots, soldiers, women attendants, oxen, and asses, gold and silver vessels of all kinds.

Thus, one idea for the portrayal of Iraq would be the natural one of "the cradle of civilization" whereby the objects which made man a civilized animal are shown--metallurgy, the wheel, the ox-cart, the pack ass and the sailing ship--have been called the chief foundations of civilization and examples of each and all are to be found in this ancient land between the rivers.

The Arch of Ctesiphon is an impressive example of what can be done with mud bricks. This arch is one still standing ruin of the ancient city of Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sassanian kings who wrested control of the

area from the Parthians in A.D. 226.

Baghdad itself is straight out of the Arabian nights although many of the ruins have crumbled into decay. The most striking building is the Golden Mosque of Khazimein and is a demonstration of the marvel of gold. This is one of the chief holy places of the Shia Moslems and one is still quite apt to see donkeys and camels approaching with coffins. The Souks or covered bazaars of Baghdad are famous. The Street of the Coppersmiths has scores of craftsman at work at their ancient trade. Other sites worthy of note in Iraq are the coracles which have been used from time immemorial to float material down the Tigris and Euphrates from the upland country.

The ancient irrigation system is also of interest as are the huge groves of date palms along the rivers.

Oil is the latest development in Iraq's economy and in contrast to Arabia where all the money apparently goes into the sheiks' pockets, here it is being used on a vast system of public works. (The ancient bitumen with which Noah pitched his ark; Hit on the Euphrates has been the chief source of bitumen for 5000 years—a product associated with oil.)

Hammurabi—an ancient Assyrian king—first codified existing laws and our legal precedence as we know it today dates back into principal to Hammurabi's Code. Nineveh was of course in present-day Iraq; Nebucadnezzar came from this region—the list goes on indefinitely—the Garden of Eden, Babylon, the Tower of Babel, the Flood—all were in what is now Iraq.

#### Iran

This is ancient Peria and its history, too, goes back almost to recorded time. Persepolis, the ancient city of Darius and Xerxes, is located in present-day Iran; its riches are reported to have been staggering and Alexander is reported to have used 20,000 mules and 5000 camels to transport its treasures to Ecbatana. Persepolis is one of the treasure spots of the Near East and we may want to do something with it (also a considerable amount of stock is available). However, at the present stage of discussion we might better limit ourselves to two outstanding facets of Iran—one the famous Oriental carpets which come from here and secondly, the city of Isfahan.

The Oriental carpet industry is one for which Iran is perhaps best known. The carpets are handwoven and dyed from native berries, etc; take their name from the towns in which they are made—Tabriz, etc. A color photo of one of these masterpieces nearing completion might do it for this part of the Near East.

Isfahan is the famous city of the Blue Mosques. Isfahan is the creation of the Shah Abbas—a fabulous city, the embodiment of the dreams of a monarch reared on traditions of fairy-tale splendor. At one end of the great square is the blue Great Mosque with its domes and minarets and iwans a blaze of colored tiles. (The Near East is the center of Islamism and some place we've got to have the mosques, etc., and Isfahan might well be the best location since it is such a fabulous fairy tale.

First pictures:  
 Palais de culture et  
 les Galeries.  
 TABA THE MAX MAR  
 4K Egyptian  
 looking down  
 of back of  
 my vest before  
 first one.

B.W. TEHERAN  
FILM I. SUNDAY  
H.P. 3. NORMAL  
SHOTS OF  
PALACE IN WHICH  
NEW YEARS RECEPTION  
WILL BE HELD.  
Egyptian looking  
STONE THRONE OF  
DYNASTIC BEFORE  
ACTIVITY.  
SOME SHOTS INSIDE  
BUT ONE. NEW YORK  
CROWD.  
SHOTS OF STREETS  
ROUND BAZAAR

TAKEN FROM CAR.

H.P. 3.	NORMAL
FILM II	MONDAY
H.P. 3 NORMAL 18.3.52	
SHOTS OF CROWD IN	
SHOPPING STREET,	
CENTRAL TOWN.	

— 19.3.52

Préparation réception  
 Shah Palais Golestan.

H.P. 3.	NORMAL
FILM IV	Peuples
chênes d'ifs, font	
Montagne, bauhinia	
fond de Teheran.	

Tomber au shah  
 Shah à Reï.  
 Plage Péte shah  
 avec des  
 bus.  
 chaussaux

Film IV. H.P. 3. NOR

Peuples sud  
 - télés. briques.  
 le BAZAAR - JEVR X

FILM V H.P. 3.

briques sud bauhinia  
 Teheran. ~~every street~~  
~~every 28 exposed~~

N00285

56-

56-9.

## CAPTIONS IRAN

for

HOLIDAY MAGAZINE.

- 770/32 TEHERAN - General view of the throne room in the Golestan Palace with the Peacock throne in the background. In the foreground the table is laid for the No-Ruz (Persian New Year's) reception held by His Imperial Majesty, the Shah. Persian New Year is celebrated on the 21st of March, the beginning of Spring according to an old Arian tradition.
- 770/35 TEHERAN - Close-up of the Peacock Throne (inside the Golestan Palace) brought back by Nadar Shah after his victorious campaign to India. The throne is of gold, jewel inlaid. Above the throne a portrait of the present Shah.
- 770/7 TEHERAN - Veiled women walking through a street of the Iranian capital. Though the custom of wearing the long veil (Tshador) that completely wraps the body and hides hands and part of the face was abandoned by Reza Shah, father of the present ruler, it has come back into custom and most women in Iran still cling to it.
- 771/19A TEHERAN - Empress Soraya receives the Diplomatic Corps at the occasion of the celebration of the New Year in the mirror hall of the Marble Palace. Guests kiss the hand of the Empress or courtesy after receiving a gold coin. Celebration of Persian New Year begins on the 21st of March, the first day of Spring.
- 773/30 TEHERAN - Sciuscia boy in the Bazaar.
- 773/33A TEHERAN - Boutique that sells the top pieces for hubble-bubbles pipes that are still very much in use in Iran and the Wholde of the Near East. 773/33A
- 773/32A TEHERAN - Iranian soldier carrying a newly purchased Samovar - essential bit of household equipment in Iran. Small glasses of hot and sweet tea are served at all hours of the day, even to visitors of offices in the various ministries.
- 775/27 TEHERAN - "Strong man" who lifts wieghts, breaks chains and holds moving speeches before collecting money from the spectators, amuses his public in a Teheran suburb.
- 776/10 TEHERAN - Her Imperial Highness, Soraya of Iran, receives the members of the Cabinet on the occasion of the Persian New Years celebrations in the Hall of Mirrors in the Marble Palace.

# HOLIDAY

*A Curtis Publication* 477 Madison Avenue, New York 22 PLaza 3-8728

LOUIS F. V. MERCIER, *Picture Editor*

March 13, 1956

To Whom It May Concern:

Miss Inge Morath is on assignment from HOLIDAY to photograph scenes and activities in the countries of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Syria, Iraq and The Lebanon.

Any assistance extended Miss Morath will be appreciated by the editors of HOLIDAY.

Very truly yours,

*Louis F. V. Mercier*

LFVM:jr

**STANDARD OIL COMPANY**  
(INCORPORATED IN NEW JERSEY)  
**30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA**  
**NEW YORK 20, N.Y.**

ROOM 1626

March 9, 1956

To whom it may concern:

The bearer of this note, Miss Inge Morath, is on assignment in Abadan to take photographs for The Lamp magazine of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) - the Esso organization.

Anything you can do to assist her in her work will be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

*Edward R. Sammis*

Edward R. Sammis  
Editor of The Lamp

ERS: mm

VIA AIR MAIL

# STANDARD OIL COMPANY

(INCORPORATED IN NEW JERSEY)

30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK 20, N. Y.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

March 9, 1956

Miss Inge Morath  
Magnum Photos  
125 Rue Fauberg St. Honore  
Paris, France

Dear Inge:

Herewith at last the information you require for your visit to Abadan.

First off, check in with Milton Hagen, who is a director of Iranian Oil Company and employee relations co-ordinator for the Consortium. You will find him at the head office of the Consortium in Teheran. Mr. Hagen is a Jersey man working with the Consortium.

If for any reason Mr. Hagen should be out of the country, you may go directly to Mr. Paul Repiton, a Frenchman, who is public relations advisor to the Consortium. He is also to be found in the office of the Consortium in Teheran. These two will make the arrangements for you to go to Abadan.

Now we did not speak of visiting the oil fields. But this too would make a rich and colorful part of the story pictorially and is something you would probably want to do.

Another man who can be of great help to you is one Jim McCarran, an American from Syracuse University, on loan to the Iranian Government. He is motion picture advisor to the government with offices in the Ministry of Culture and Education at Teheran. He has had experience in taking his camera crews all over Iran and should be very helpful in advising you in all sorts of practical matters. He can also recommend to you a reliable Iranian guide and interpreter, which Mr. Rochford feels would be a necessity.

When you reach Abadan you will want to see Dr. Notgki, who is publisher of the daily paper. Dr. Notgki has a staff artist named Mr. Nikzad who is married to the niece of the chief of police at Abadan. Mr. Rochford feels that this is the best route to obtain an introduction to the police chief, who will also be of help to you.

The above persons will be sufficient to get you started and will pass you on to others who will assist you.

I am enclosing the general letter of introduction as well, and will be glad to forward any other papers as you need them.

Miss Inge Morath

March 9, 1956

While you are working on your other stories we will proceed with the necessary approvals.

Give my best to all the good people in the Paris office, and have a wonderful, exciting trip, as I know you will.

With all best wishes,

Sincerely,

Ed

---

Edward R. Sammis  
Editor of The Lamp

ERS:mm  
Enc.

cc: John Morris, Magnum, New York  
Dan Rochford

1) Vtrows (Direction)  
Tops, frames  
etc.

Big Workshops  
British - German  
main scene.

Training  
School of  
Refinery

Drive to mouth  
of River of  
Petroleum Pk.

Early morning in  
Oilfield Refinery.

Workers housing  
German children  
in houses built  
by Germans

Radio station  
Int'l School for  
children. German  
national build  
up. English  
help?

Hospital  
German national  
Int'l European  
patient.

Kinderhorten  
self supporting  
company premise.

## ABADAN

(captions)

56-9

- 1.... Behind the salty desert-like landscape around the Persian Gulf rises the fantastic industrial silhouette of Abadan's oil refinery. White heaps in foreground are mounds of salt mined from lake in background.
- 2.... View of Abadan refinery taken from top of the famous catalytic cracker.
- 3.... Another view of refinery taken from catalytic cracker. In background are oil storage tanks.
- 4.... Same as 3, from different angle.
- 5.... Men look dwarfed beside huge installations of the refinery. Plant mechanisms often look as if they run themselves but, in fact, a close watch must be kept on the most minute mechanical operation. Cooperation is essential between all plant employees, who form a miniature United Nations.
- 6.... The most important contribution foreigners can make to Persian industry is their knowledge and know-how. Here an American expert lectures to Persian engineers and administrators on new methods of management.
- 7.... In the personal relationships between foreign and Persian engineers, the common interest in their difficult job draws them together and bridges the language difficulty. Here an English and a Persian engineer discuss a routine job with another Persian technician.
- 8.... Maintenance job in the Abadan refinery. Usually a foreign technician supervises the various difficult and highly specialized jobs which must be attended to regularly.
- 9.... One of the main arteries of Abadan, the biggest oil refinery in the world, is the control room of the catalytic cracker. In the picture Mr. Rogers, a Texan and Mr. Noori, an Iranian, watch one of the control instruments before going on to supervise a maintenance job.
- 10.... Where man-to-man cooperation between nations is most tangible is in the huge workshops of the Abadan refinery. In this picture, Iranian workmen have to be trained in the use of often complicated imported machinery. It is often a difficult adjustment for an Iranian farm worker to step into the machine age. Here Mr. Prescott, an American supervisor, gives a first lesson on a drilling machine to a neophyte refinery employee.
- 11.... For very specialized jobs, sometimes trained technicians like Mr. Welland, an electrician from the English Electric Company in London, are flown to Abadan. He's showing a fascinated trainee how to put blades into a turbine.

Tchernan

Pepsi logo: factory  
just before Acapulco.  
All trucks lined up.  
Pepsi signs in town  
likely very taken  
soay to be used  
as my info basis,  
Bruce Campbell wife  
metallic, which doesn't  
surprise me because  
in bands: Philharmonic  
the Bruceanne in  
those years we had  
much food and  
several fish in  
a kind of  
or truck.

L'ANNEE DE TAPIS

A TSCHEGHIM É ALI  
(SOURCE D'ALI)  
et GRÉ DU REY

et à DOVLAT, ABA'R,  
near Khoran, Tscheghim

Photographed by INGE MORATH

THESE WERE  
FOR PEPsi COLA  
COMPANY.

Teheran, Iran

(captions)

56-9

OLD CAPTIONS

- 1..... One of the architectural beauties of Teheran. This is a large mosque near the Parliament.
- 2..... Important gate in Teheran. Entrance to police headquarters. Background is a part of chain of Alburtz Mountains. Turreted gate is covered with mosaics.
- 3..... Fascinated Teheran citizens spend their Friday afternoon holiday at the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant watching the mechanics of getting the product ready for the consumer.
- 4..... A typical cooche (narrow street) in Teheran.
- 5..... Horse decorated with leather ribbons of blue and yellow which are supposed to ward away the "evil eye." To insure that these ribbons will be successful, Iranians believe they should be stolen possessions.
- 6..... Closeup of horse protected against "evil eye."
- 7..... Entrance to small bazaar where ~~go~~ person buys all of his household needs from food to furniture.
- 8..... Street scene, with curbside conversationalists enjoying an afternoon respite.
- 9..... Hawker wanders down street selling his "speciality"-second-hand blankets.
- 10..... Hitch-hiker waiting for sympathetic motorist to arrive. The sole traveler is very deceptive, often several people hitch-hike together and have one person sit by the side of the road as a decoy.
- 11..... Women of a well-to-do Moslem family enjoy their Pepsi-Cola at informal party. Whenever guests arrive, Iranian women immediately put on tsaadars to cover themselves respectfully. They are sitting on one of famous Kerman carpets.
- 12..... Drinking Pepsi-Cola à la Orientale. Men are ~~sitting~~ in typical teahouse where customers sit on low, wooden ~~benches~~ covered with Persian carpet.
- 13..... Mineral pool where Persian carpets are washed. In background is teahouse shown in 13. Mineral water has special qualities which preserve the colors.
- 14..... Boys tying knots in carpeting for which Iran is famous. They must follow pattern on wall closely because it takes days to untie just one of the knots.

FILMS VI VII IX X  
 H.P.S. # III IV V  
POUSSE R

Reception No - Rehearsal

Palais' Collection.

Shah - Diplomats

- gathering in door  
stein room

Their hosts

Reception into bush:  
Diplomats, Honey,  
Commerce, etc.

Coming up steps.

VI, XV

FILM F. H.P.S NORMA

BAZAAR TETERAN  
INTERIOR. HOME

NIGHT SCENE OUTSIDE

BAZAAR OF VARIOUS

PEDDLERS. /

Ex. BAZAAR

FILMS H.P.S VI VII

NORMAL & OBSERVER

POUETTE UN PGU

SOUSEXPOSEE.

Reception Novel  
in dans le Palais  
de la foret de  
la Reine Foreya.  
D'abord government  
actuel, see first  
a plot come to  
end lucerne.  
Kamolkin. Then

Diplomats and  
wives. Tea  
Foreya tells  
to Diplomats  
close-ups Foreya.

FILMS H.P.3

NORMAL VI, VII

Reception others  
le Palais, oh  
mother. le Reine  
Foreya done

NW Roll Nr.  
in stock.

IRAN

TO NEW YORK  
Inge Morath  
NO 285R

Iran Roll Captions

Roll no. 769 (806)

Frames 3210 Reception room and entrance hall inside the Golestan Palace in Teheran. Inside this palace the Shah holds his New Year reception and other state functions. ~~The palace exists open to the public when~~

12 to 21 Photographs taken inside the tomb of Reza Shah, father of the present emperor and founder of the Pahlavi dynasty.

22 Rey, a small town about 10 miles outside Teheran whose Mosque for centuries has been a center for pilgrimages. New walls on the foreground are part of the tomb to the memory ~~to~~ of Reza Shah.

23 to 37 a Street workers and camels outside the southern industrial suburbs of Teheran. Snow capped mountains in the background are part of the impressive Alborz range, rising steeply behind Teheran.

Roll no. 770 (808)  
Frames 3211

Scenes in various small streets of Teheran: Women wearing the traditional tshador, a heavy veil covering them from head to foot, contrasting sharply with the modern cars; a street vendor counts his money.

12 --27 The private reception room of <sup>His</sup> the imperial majesty is being prepared for the No Ruz (New Year reception) which takes place on the 21st of March. Mirror inlaid walls and ceilings, crystal chandeliers, precious persian carpets cover the floor. According to an old Aryan tradition, a table is laid with bowls containing 7 kinds of fruits and spices and nuts all whose names must start with s.

28- 33 General view of the throne room in the Golestan Palace with the Peacock Throne in the background. Large alcoves are used to display ~~in~~ some of the precious gifts given to the rulers of Iran by the Kings and emperors of foreign countries.

34 -35 Close up of the Peacock Throne brought back to Iran by Nadar Shah after his victorious campaign to India. The throne is of gold, jewel-inlaid. Above the throne a portrait of the present Shah.

**STORY FROM  
MAGNUM**

MORATH  
N00093  
56-9  
IRAN

Photographed by INGE MORATH

NO-RUZ: IRAN'S FESTIVE  
NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

(text)

Iran's oldest traditional feast day, and the most solemn and joyous event in the Iranian year, is No-Ruz, New Year's Day. In this ancient land the New Year begins on March 21st, the spring equinox. Winter ends, flowers start to bloom, leaves and buds appear on the trees: it is time to celebrate the end of one year and the entrance of another.

In ancient times No-Ruz meant not only the welcoming of new plant life and physical reawakening, but a spiritual maturing and progression to a higher kind of wisdom. The Persians also believed that the seasons symbolized the perpetuity of Iran as a country. According to Persian legend, a sacred flame fell on Iran and split itself into three tongues after its fall: the first is the No-Ruz, or spring flame; the second is the summer flame; the third flame is for winter. The No-Ruz flame, which fell on the province of Khorassan, was called the flame of the peasants and farmers. Offerings of the first spring fruits and flowers were brought to the temple of Khorassan and the Angel of the Earth was the patron of No-Ruz. Although many of these ancient Aryan traditions are no longer followed, they form the basis for present-day No-Ruz celebrations.

The Iranians, like everyone else, want to start the New Year on the right foot. Therefore on the last Wednesday of the old year, just before No-Ruz begins, branches and dead leaves are gathered into large piles and placed on special metal platters. Later, all these piles are fired while the people form circles around the bonfires and chant, invoking the help of the fire spirits in the coming year. This is now a secular ceremony which almost certainly had its origin in some ancient Zoroastrian ritual, though most of the people who follow this tradition have long-since forgotten its original meaning.

Though a solemn holiday, No-Ruz is also a period of friendly celebrations. During the thirteen days of festivities, Iranian citizens entertain their friends in houses lavishly decorated with flowers; they serve special food, buy new clothing and jewelry if they can afford it. Native bazaars are crowded as young and old spend

# STORY FROM **MAGNUM**

Photographed by INGE MORATH

Page 2

## NO-RUZ: IRAN'S FESTIVE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

(text)

precious "rials" on No-Ruz decorations. And, of course, the pièce de résistance at any celebration is the No-Ruz table which must display the traditional seven "S" foods--that is, foods whose names begin with "S" in Persian: 1. Sir (garlic); 2. Serkeh (vinegar); 3. Samanu (sugared or sweetened flour); 4. Sib (apple); 5. Soumak (vegetable, like a lentil); 6. Senjed (fruit, like a date); 7. Sabzi (vegetable).

On the thirteenth and last day of No-Ruz, plants are thrown into rivers and on meadows to cast away evil spirits, because both land and water must be protected from misfortune in the coming year. These are special plants grown from seeds sown just before the end of the old year.

One of the most enjoyable parts of No-Ruz festivities is the "open house" spirit of the season, when friends and acquaintances call on each other. These visits follow the order of rank or age, the youngest calling first on the oldest and so on. Obviously, the most important of the No-Ruz "open houses" are the receptions given by the Shah, Mohammed Riza Pahlevi and Queen Soraya for the diplomatic corps, Iranian government and Army officials, and other delegations. The Shah's reception is at Kakh Golestan Palace, Queen Soraya's at the Marble Palace, both in Teheran. Each guest at these receptions receives the traditional No-Ruz gift of a gold or silver coin from the monarchs.

This year, Magnum photographer Inge Morath was invited to the festivities and was allowed to photograph the royal receptions. Attached are her exclusive pictures.

Inge Morath.Magnum Photos.  
125 Rue du Faubourg St.Honore.  
Paris 8e.

CURRICULUM VITAE.

Born in Austria; Everything happy until the war. Most of that in Berlin. High School, University: Philosophy and Philology. M.A. Then journalistic work as a writer for Austrian papers, Salzburger Nachrichten, Wiener Kurier, Wiener Illustrierte, Optimist. Features, Theatre reviews. Also series of Radio plays for the Red-White-Red network in Vienna. First contact with picture journalism through Warren Trabant, editor of "Heute" magazine in Germany who hired me as his Austrian correspondent. Team work with Ernst Haas, joined Magnum as researcher and writer in 1948. First own photographs - as a beginner naturally outside Magnum - in 1951 in Venice. Never stopped since. Work as freelance with Simon Guttman in London (he first employed Robert Capa in his darkroom, made him take pictures), first big own story "France's Workmen Priest". Rejoined Magnum as photographer in 1952. One year work as assistant to Henri Cartier Bresson - few own pictures, mainly research, but learned a lot. Since end 1953 own stories, first important assignment "Soho" for Holiday magazine. Longest and most exciting trip so far to the Middle East. Country I love to photograph best is Spain.  
3 books: Fiesta in Pamplona (Delpire)  
Venice observed (with Mary MacCarthy) (Bernier)  
Iran -to be published in Sept. 1957 - (Delpire)

## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- 270 Travel document from Magnum Photos certifying Inge Morath's status as a press photographer for the agency and listing her equipment in the Middle East.
- 271 *Holiday Magazine* "Middle East Subject List" for Inge Morath. See also page 260, letter to Inge Morath from Louis F.V. Mercier, Picture Editor.
- 272-75 *Holiday Magazine* "Middle East Shooting Script" for Inge Morath. Pages 3 and 4 are missing from Morath's archive.
- 276 Notes from Inge Morath's shooting notebooks while on assignment for *Holiday Magazine*. These notes would have been written while she was working and later used as a reference during film processing and caption writing.
- 277 Caption sheet submitted to *Holiday Magazine* with Morath's assigned photographs of the Middle East.
- 278 *Holiday Magazine* letter of assignment.
- 279 Standard Oil Company letter of assignment.
- 280-81 Letter to Inge Morath from Edward R. Sammis, editor of *The Lamp*, a publication of the Standard Oil Company in which her photographs of Abadan would be used.
- 282 Notes from Abadan in Inge Morath's shooting notebooks.
- 283 Caption sheet submitted to *The Lamp* with Morath's assigned photographs for the Standard Oil Company.
- 284 Notes from Inge Morath's shooting notebooks made while photographing for Pepsi-Cola. (No correspondence between or letter of assignment from Pepsi-Cola to Inge Morath is known to exist.)
- 285 Caption sheet submitted to Pepsi-Cola with Morath's assigned photographs of its bottling facility in Tehran.
- 286 Notes from Inge Morath's shooting notebooks made in Tehran (top) and at the Nowruz reception at the Golestan Palace, Tehran (bottom).
- 287 Caption sheet for Magnum Photos' distribution of Morath's photographs of the Nowruz celebration at the Golestan Palace and in Tehran.
- 288-89 Press release by Magnum Photos announcing the distribution of Inge Morath's Nowruz story.
- 290 Inge Morath's *curriculum vitae*, circa 1957.





### Acknowledgements

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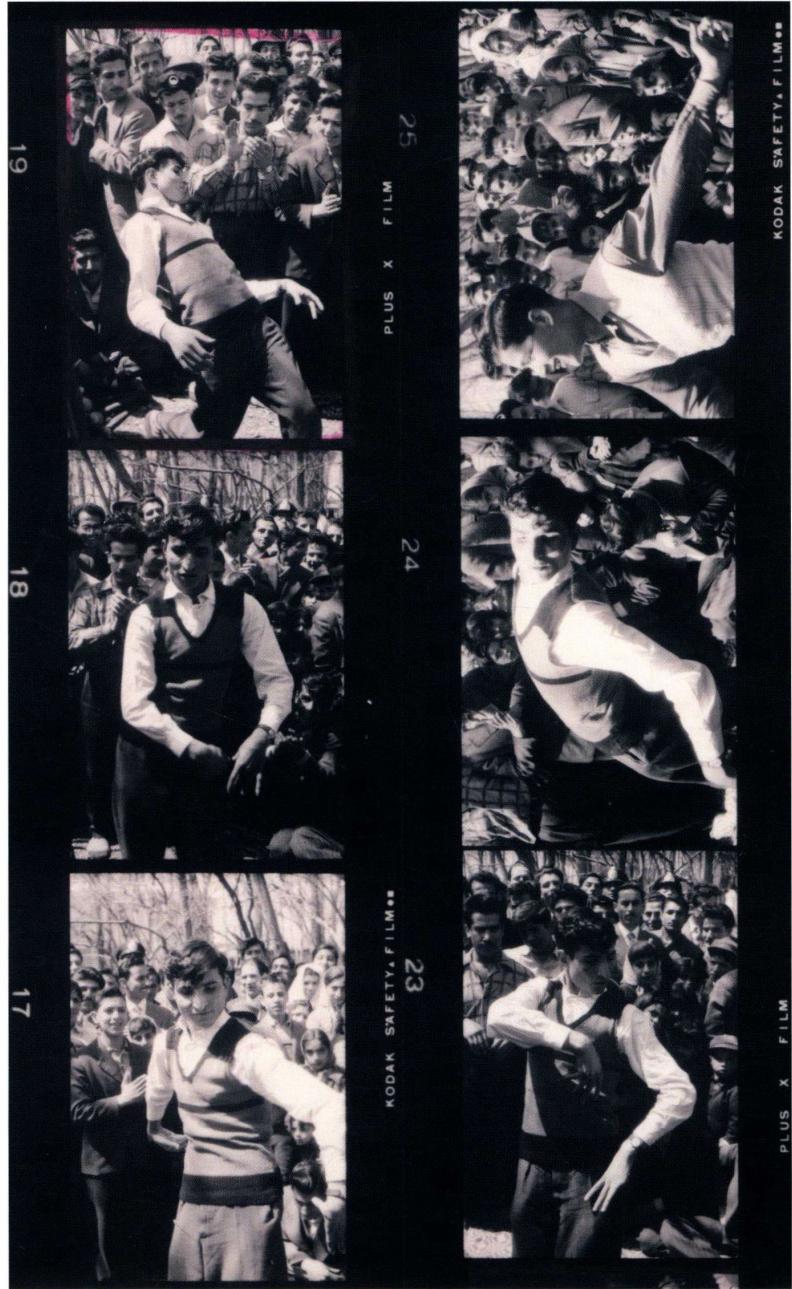
While working on this book I have benefited from conversations with many of Inge Morath's friends and colleagues, including Inge Bondi, Tom Cole, Robert Delpire, Anna Farova, Jimmy Fox, and John Morris. At Magnum Photos, I was grateful for the comments of Abbas, Diane Dufour, Valérie Fougeirol, Josef Koudelka, and Susan Meiselas. Finbarr Barry Flood, Associate Professor, Department of Art History at New York University, and Jeff Spurr, Islamic and Middle East Specialist, the Aga Khan Program at Harvard University, provided invaluable insights into the photographs. Thanks also to Stuart Alexander, Noriko Fuku, Bodo von Dewitz, Gail Levin, Mark Sloan, and Brad Thomas for their comments and support. Sarah Chalfant and Edward Orloff at the Wylie Agency introduced me to Azar Nafisi, and Leila Austin at the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins helped us to keep in touch.

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Inge Morath is represented by Magnum Photos and the Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York. The traveling exhibition of *Inge Morath: Iran* is available through the Exhibitions and Cultural Projects program at Magnum Photos.



Boy drummer and musician in a courtyard, Isfahan (enlargement from contact sheet).



13<sup>th</sup> day of the Persian New Year, outside Tehran. Dancer (enlargement from contact sheet).

Images have been losslessly embedded. Information about the original file can be found in PDF attachments. Some stats (more in the PDF attachments):

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